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WEDDING RINGS

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LONDON:
JAMES BLACKWOOD, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1855.

WEDDING RINGS.

"Collecting all the heart's sweet ties into one knot of happiness."—MOORE.

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WEDDING RINGS.

THE MYSTERIOUS PACKAGE.

This is the age of progress, of telegraph, of steam, of social go-a-head-ativeness, or, in other words, the age of making haste to be rich, with too often a stolid obliviousness of the snare into which the winner of wealth might fall at the end of the race. What has such an age to do with love stories? Are not such old-fashioned notions exploded? And has it not become problematical whether the passion known by the name of love ever had existence; and if it ever did exist, save in the brain of some demented girl, should it not be frowned out of society?

"Heyday! my little niece; what is all this tirade about? What surly woman-hater has been decrying the novelettes of the day?"

"Oh! uncle Walter; how did you manage to steal in so quietly, and look over my shoulder without my being aware of it?"

"Is that the way you mean to escape—answering one question by asking another? It was very

easy for me to slip through an open door to which your back was turned, while your head was bent down, and your mind pondering on love stories."

"Not exactly on love stories, uncle, but on the hue and cry raised against them, when they appear in the magazines. Lengthen out a love tale, and publish it in a book; that is altogether a different affair, and no voice is raised against it. Yet I venture to say, that in all the love stories published in our magazines since they were first issued, there will not be found a tithe of the immorality that teems in the foreign novels whose translations almost flood the press. Now, the world is full of love. From the bright birds, which, in the summer sunshine, pour love-melody upon the breeze—from the tiniest blossom that rears its head to drink the splendours of the golden day—from these, up to the homes and hearths consecrated by the holiest sympathies of our nature (and oh! God help the homes where love is not!)—from these, link by link, up to the golden chain by which angels pass from earth to heaven—from these, upward still, higher, still higher, up to where burning seraphs sing their praise before the great white throne—all, all is love!"

"Hey, what a flight! But what has such love to do with sickly, sentimental love-stories?"

"Dear uncle, let us understand each other. I have no sympathy with what you call sickly senti-

mentalism, but love, *true* love, is one of the most ennobling passions of the human heart. Every thought of self is merged in the one desire how best to promote the happiness of the beloved; hence that most hateful of hated vices, selfishness, cannot dwell with true love. It will not stoop to petty deceits, to shifts, to subterfuges; hence all that is open, candid, honest, belongs to true love. It will not swerve from the path of duty, but will pass unfaltering through the furnace of trial with the love-angel folded to its heart. Look at the babe upon its mother's knee! its first lispings are words of love. Look at the wife who has pledged her vows at the holy altar. See her brightening her husband's home with sunny smiles; see her watching over him in sickness, soothing him in sorrow, and when misfortunes lower around him, see her cling to him more tenderly. When, perhaps, prompted by despair, he wishes to be left alone in his wretchedness, and exclaims, 'Leave me,' listen to the wifely answer, 'Why, all have left thee!'"

"Stop, niece, pray stop. I shall never be able to follow in that love-world of yours. I meant that you should read to me for an hour or two. Here, sit down like a sensible girl, and read the 'Vestiges of Creation.' Away with the frivolities of love, and let us instead have the mysteries of science."

"Uncle dear, don't ask me to read that book now. Its theories are very ingenious, but you know I belong to the same class as Cowper's good dame, who

"'Knew, and knew no more, her Bible true.'

Now, to one that believes that God made man in His own image, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, it is very absurd to imagine that the poor biped passed through so many transformations as the author of the 'Vestiges' would have us believe he did."

"You are in a very captious mood to-day," said my uncle. "What say you to Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity? No? Well, here is old Burton himself. Let us study for awhile his quaint 'Anatomie.'"

I saw by the twinkle in Uncle Walter's eye that he was jesting with me, and I determined to punish him forthwith. Pushing aside the books and papers lying on the table, and wheeling a large arm-chair, such as has been aptly termed "Sleepy Hollow," in front of the open window, I took his hands in mine, and led him to the seat.

"Now, uncle," said I, "you are my prisoner until you tell me a veritable love-story."

"Nonsense, child, I can't tell one."

"Oh! uncle, uncle; don't you recollect how I caught you one evening repeating—

" ' Oh ! love, religion, music ; all
That's left of Eden upon earth !'

Have you forgotten your admiration of that most exquisite passage in Coleridge's Wallenstein—

" ' For fable is Love's home ? '

Uncle mine, you must tell me a love-story. I am sure you can tell one just as easily as you repeated ' Beauty and the Beast,' when I sat on your knee long ago. That's a dear, good uncle ; you will, will you not ?"

Uncle Walter's face grew grave and sad, and I had come to the resolution not to torment him any more, when he said :

" I will go to my room for a few moments ; when I return, I will tell you a story."

Uncle Walter was my mother's eldest brother. He was a bachelor, and though over fifty, we never called him *old* bachelor. Old ! the idea was preposterous ! Dear Uncle Walter, with his fine, florid complexion, and bright hazel eye, with a kind word ever on his lip, and a perpetual fountain of love within his heart ; ever ready to tell fairy tales, or to join in blind-man's-buff ; the most expert in raising the Christmas tree, and the most generous in loading it with gifts—it would have been a libel to call Uncle Walter *old* bachelor.

In his youth, my uncle had travelled much in foreign parts. He had visited most of Northern

Europe, and when I was a little girl, my place was on his knee, where I listened with wonder to his tales of Russia, shuddered as he spoke of the Norwegian Maelstrom, or hung delighted on his pictures of Swedish life. How have those old talks with Uncle Walter since given redoubled zest to Frederica Bremer's tales of Sweden!

When my uncle returned he had a package in his hand, which he laid upon my writing-desk, and after sitting silent some minutes, he said to me—

"There is something I have brought for you to look at."

I broke the seal of the envelope, and saw several letters, the paper of which had grown yellow, and the ink faded. One small parcel was tied with a ribbon. I held it in my hand, and glanced inquiringly at my uncle.

"Open it," he said, in a tremulous voice. Mechanically I obeyed. It was a miniature on ivory of a young and lovely woman. There were the bright blue eyes and soft flaxen hair peculiar to Swedish women, while the countenance was calm, holy, and Madonna-like in its purity and beauty.

"Oh! who is this lovely creature?" I exclaimed, pressing the beautiful semblance to my lips. "Uncle dear, I am filled with curiosity; do tell me all about her. I am sure hers must be a love-story."

Uncle Walter looked disturbed, and sighed deeply. I had never seen him so moved before; and surmising that he had more than a common interest in the original of the miniature, I repented of my folly, and, begging him to think no more of the story, said that I would read to him. Taking down Willis's poems, I opened at "Hagar in the Wilderness," which I knew to be an especial favourite of my uncle's, and commenced reading.

He had thrown himself back in his chair, and covered his face with one of his hands. I was sitting beside him on a low ottoman, holding in mine the hand that lay listlessly in his lap. I read on, until I reached the beautiful lines—

> "Oh! man may bear with suffering; his heart
> Is a strong thing, and godlike in the grasp
> Of pain that wrings mortality: but tear
> One cord affection clings to, part one tie
> That binds him to a woman's delicate love,
> And his great spirit yieldeth like a reed."

While reading this passage, I felt my uncle's hand tremble in mine, and I laid down the book. It appeared as if everything I did, instead of soothing, as I intended, but pained him more and more. I sat silent, with tears in my eyes, fearful that if I attempted further kindness, I should but blunder upon some wrong method of showing it. My uncle was the first to speak.

"Dear child," said he, laying his hand caress-

ingly on my head, "I thought that I could bear with more fortitude these remembrances of the past. I meant some day or other to give you that miniature, and to tell you of the original. Let me tell you now—nay," he added, seeing me about to speak, "it must be now, or my courage may again fail me."

I drew closer to Sleepy Hollow, placed my finger on my lip, as I am wont to do when I am anxious to hear every word that is spoken, and listened to my uncle's story.

"When I first went abroad, I was intrusted with letters from a highly esteemed friend to his relatives in Stockholm.

"It was on a Sunday that I went to the house of Gustave Bernstein, for the purpose of delivering the parcels I had in charge. The bells were ringing for morning service, and some of the members of Mr. Bernstein's family had already gone to church. He was still at home, and received me warmly. After many inquiries concerning his relatives, he told me that the rite of confirmation was that day to be administered by the Bishop, and invited me, if I had no pressing engagement, to accompany him and see the ceremony. I consented gladly. Holy and beautiful sight! The youth of both sexes filled the chancel around the altar.

" ' On the right hand the boys had their places,
Delicate figures, with close curling hair and cheeks rosy-blooming ;
But on the left hand of these, there stood the tremulous lilies,
Tinged with the blushing light of the morning, the diffident maidens,
Folding their hands in prayer, and their eyes cast down on the pavement.'

" Among that group of fair young maidens was one whose saint-like countenance, full of the inner light of the spiritual life, drew my thoughts from all the rest. It seemed in that blessed moment as if her guardian angel hovered so near that he cast the reflection of his own brightness on her who was the object of his care.

" My soul was soothed and elevated as I continued to gaze on the young girl's angelic beauty, and the world, with its petty cares and clashing interests, was forgotten. The blessing was pronounced. The solemn strains of Handel pealed from the organ. The congregation slowly moved from the sacred edifice. I could think of nothing but the vision of purity which had been revealed to my sight. I went home with Mr. Bernstein, like one who walks in his sleep. Accepting his invitation to dinner, I strove to rouse myself from the abstraction into which I had fallen, and talked with my host of his relatives beyond the sea.

While conversing, the door opened and a female entered.

" ' Christine,' said Mr. Bernstein, ' this is the gentleman who brought you the miniature of your aunt;' then turning to me he introduced his niece.

" I knew not, in my confusion, what I said, but I saw that Christine blushed. It must have been that she felt for my embarrassment. With a charming frankness, she extended her hand and told me how much she thanked me for having brought these love-tokens from abroad. I was in Elysium! The hand that pressed mine was that of the young maiden, whose angel watched beside her at the altar. Yes, that maiden was Christine!

" Open-hearted hospitality, simple, unobtrusive kindness, threw a charm around the home of my Swedish friends, and during my stay in Stockholm I was their daily guest.

" From her uncle I learned that Christine was motherless, and that from the age of five years she had grown up under the charge of her father, the estimable pastor Bernstein.

" Living a life of seclusion in a village whose inhabitants were marked by an almost patriarchal simplicity of habits and pursuits, Christine had reached womanhood with a spirit stainless as the lotus-leaf, when it first unfolds its beauties to the light of day.

"About a year after the death of his wife, the good clergyman had received into his house the orphan son of an old friend. Carl and Christine shared the same sports and the same studies. 'Baith bent down ower ae braid page,' and the boy watched with delight his companion's thirst for knowledge—thirst as intense as that of LILIS, who won the bright-winged angel from his native heaven. Ah! Christine wanted but the wings to make her an angel too! And yet she was a very woman in her quick, ardent feelings, in her strong capacity for loving, in her ideal dreamings, fostered by familiarity with the Sagas of her native land.

"But this was Christine's inner world. Here she dwelt apart, communing with the beautiful and good. She affected no eccentricities of speech or conduct. She made no unwomanly display of her deep and varied acquirements. To the every-day observer she was but the quiet daughter of a quiet country pastor, moving in her limited sphere of duty with a calm demeanour, and a kind care for every one of her father's parishioners. To her father she was the ever attentive, loving child; nurse, housekeeper, companion; the light of his home, and the pride of his heart. To the boy Carl she was the embodiment of all sweet and lovely thoughts; an idol to be worshipped; a blessed child of dream-land; an Undine, with her

woman soul, calm, subdued, and holy as a poet's dream of love.

"Alas for Carl! Christine regarded him but as a dear brother. Her very confidingness, her open, child-like kindness, taught him this. When, after an absence of four years at the university, he returned to find his playmate grown to womanhood, and when she met him frankly, with no blush on her cheek, no sinking of the voice, no nervous trembling of the hand; while his heart throbbed tumultuously, and his lips could hardly fashion their utterance to meet her ear—in that moment was dissipated the golden day-dream of the student's life. In that moment he knew that he was not beloved.

"Pastor Bernstein gazed delightedly on his own boy, as he fondly called Carl, and already in fancy saw him the husband of Christine.

"The good old man had long wished that his young friend might be his successor in the ministry, and that, ere he slept with his fathers, he might give his darling child to the fond protection of his favourite. It never occurred to the worthy pastor that his daughter might not love Carl. He had seen them grow up from childhood apparently attached to each other, one in their pursuits, their sorrows, and their joys, and he hoped that the cord was silently and surely weaving which would make them one in their fates and in their lives.

"Bitter was his disappointment when he learned that there was no foundation for his hope, and so anxious was he for the accomplishment of his wishes, that he bade the young man not despair, for Christine might yet be won. He daily watched his daughter, as if his happiness depended on any show of kindness from her to Carl; and if he thought at any time her manner towards him was more tender than usual, the old man's eyes would brighten with delight.

"It was while matters were in this state that I arrived in Stockholm, and was present at the confirmation of Christine. She had then been staying a month with her relatives, and was soon to go home. Her uncle would accompany her, and a warm invitation was given me to go with them, and let the pastor hear from my own lips of the welfare of his dearly-loved youngest sister. Almost too glad to speak my thanks, and afraid that my emotion might betray itself, I accepted the invitation.

"There are some quiet, out-of-the way nooks in this world of ours, which serve to remind one of Eden before the serpent left his trail upon the flowers, and such a spot was the parsonage of good pastor Bernstein. There are some fresh, young, innocent hearts which would have been meet inhabitants of that primeval paradise ere the first woman believed too easily the serpent's honeyed lies. Such a heart was Christine's.

"It was enough for the old man to learn that I knew and esteemed his sister, to win for me his warmest hospitality; and when Gustave Bernstein was about to return home, it needed little persuasion to make me remain. A love of nature, a love of books, a love of Christine—what a world of happiness was mine in that secluded parsonage! And when a fawn-like shyness, a sudden drooping of the eyelid, a quick mounting of the eloquent blood, all told me in unmistakable language that Christine regarded me in a warmer light than that of a friend, my heart was intoxicated with the fulness of its bliss.

"Pastor Bernstein was unconscious of our mutual passion; but Carl—from my heart I pitied him! With the unrequited love of a lifetime corroding into his soul, he was doomed daily to see the mute tokens of Christine's devotion to another. I call them mute tokens, for the gentle girl shrank from paining the playmate of her early years by any show of preference for me when he was present. A soft delicious languor was steeping my senses in forgetfulness, when I was roused by a letter from home.

"My mother, whom I had left in the full enjoyment of health, was alarmingly ill, and my father wrote for my immediate return. I was inexpressibly shocked at this intelligence. This was not a time to speak to pastor Bernstein of my love for

his daughter. My feelings were too much harrowed at the thought of losing my mother, and my conscience reproached me with the selfishness which had lulled me into forgetfulness of home.

"My noble Christine! how tenderly she sought to soothe my grief, and to make me believe that we should soon be re-united. My darling Christine! how she outpoured the rich hoard of her love to bless me in the hour of parting.

"'I dread the effect on my father, when he can no longer hope that I may marry Carl. But I am yours, Walter; in time and eternity, I am yours.'

"She checked herself, as if she were saying too much. Modesty and love dwelt together in her pure soul.

"'Bless you for those words, my own Christine. I know not when I may return, but if ever you find me to be faithless, from that moment you are free.'

"She looked up at me with her dear innocent eyes, wondering why I spoke of faithlessness to her. Ah! 'the finest hair casts a shadow.'

"It was about two months before I reached home. My mother was still living; but oh! my heart was agonized as I looked on the wan features and attenuated form of my beloved parent. Contrary to all expectations, she was spared to us until the following spring. I never left her, except when compelled to do so. The struggle between

death and life, between the perishable body and the imperishable spirit, was at length over. I followed her remains to the grave. I heard the earth fall upon her coffin. Oh! mournfulest of all mournful sounds! Then we feel in reality that our love is no longer of avail. It can no more prepare the warm place at the fireside, or shelter from the wind and the rain the beloved. The forms once so carefully guarded, there they lie! The snows of winter fall upon them, the suns of summer shine upon them, the storm spends its fury on their narrow dwelling—still, cold, unconscious, there they lie! If we have grieved them, and if the memory of our waywardness bows our spirits to the dust, they hear not our pleadings for pardon, they see not our tears of agony, they cannot fold us to their hearts, and whisper that we are forgiven — ah! no, no; mute, cold, unconscious, there they lie! We shall not behold them again until the morning of the resurrection. Then, purified, glorified, we shall behold them again. 'For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality!' Thank God, thank God for the glorious hope!

"My father did not long survive the loss of my mother. Their union had been so closely cemented by years of mutual love, that the breaking of one life-cord loosened the other, and in a little while they slept side by side in their silent home.

"Three sisters and a little brother were left to my care. I could not leave them alone, and thus violate the trust reposed in me by my dying parents, and yet my heart yearned to be with Christine. I had written to her, but it was so long before I obtained an answer that my spirit chafed under the delay. At last I received a letter from Christine. She told me of her father's sorrow, and of the tender mournfulness with which he regarded Carl. Her union with me seemed to the good pastor wholly impracticable. I resided in a distant land, and was bound to it by ties the most sacred. Never could he part with his darling, never could he suffer her to go from him—she, the one pet lamb of the village shepherd. To such a letter what reply could I make, but to beg Christine to wait, and to hope?

"Before I went abroad I had often visited the family of Mr. Perceval. Between his daughter Agnes and myself had sprung up a sort of flirting intimacy; that is, I waited on her to places of public amusement, was always the first to ask her hand for the dance, and in many ways made myself agreeable to her. Secluded from society by the afflictions in our family, I had seldom seen Agnes since my return, though I found that she was on terms of intimacy with my sisters, and that I had often been the theme of her discourse. Agnes

Perceval was what is called a magnificent woman. Tall, of a full and luxurious form, with large black eyes, which, except when half veiled by the lids, might be thought too bold in expression; a complexion in which the slightest shade of olive, mingling with the rich warm blood of youth, imparted a hue sunny as that on the cheek of a beautiful Contadina, Agnes moved and looked a queen.

"It was strange that during our long acquaintance my heart had never done homage to her charms. But hers was not the style of beauty I admired. It was too commanding, too Juno-like, better fitted for the gaiety of the crowded *salon* than for the quiet of the domestic hearth. Oh, how unlike was she to Christine!

"When I first met Agnes, after the death of my father, her manner was so gentle, so full of sympathy, that she appeared to me in a more favourable light than when we had laughed and flirted together before I left home. Time, the healer of many sorrows, was noiselessly stealing month after month of my years of life, and I once more began to mingle with my fellows.

"But everywhere there was a void. I missed my blessed mother's welcoming smile, I missed my noble father's approving voice, and, to add to my wretchedness, I heard no more from Christine. Pride and jealousy took possession of my soul. I

imagined her the wife of Carl, happy in her new relations, blessed by her father, forgetful of myself. In these unhappy moments, when the tempest of passion was raging within, I was sometimes on the point of offering myself to Agnes.

"'How unmanly it is,' I would say to myself, 'to suffer thus for a woman who has forgotten me! I know that Agnes regards me with tenderness: why not make her happy?'

"But when the mind-storm was stilled, then questions uprose from the innermost depths of the spirit. 'Do you love Agnes? Would it be honourable to marry her from motives of jealousy or pique? Would such marriage make either happy?' Loudly my heart answered, 'No!'

"Agnes and my eldest sister were almost inseparable. They were both accomplished musicians, possessing voices of wonderful power and sweetness, which harmonised and blended together like one rich strain of airy harp-chords. One evening I was sitting alone, brooding over my griefs. The dim twilight was softly veiling all outward objects, and gradually as they faded from the view, the light within the soul became more clear and radiant. I have often thought it must be so with the blind—that those whom 'ever-during dark surrounds,' must have their mental vision increased tenfold. Oh, what hallowed remembrances come to us in the soft hush of twilight!

"'Then the forms of the departed
Enter at the open door;
The beloved, the true-hearted,
Come to visit us once more.'

"Down the long vista of years glides thought after thought. Every kind word to which we have listened, every warm hand-pressure we have returned, every heart-greeting to which our heart has responded, every look and every tone of the parted, 'the mourned, the loved, the lost,' there they are in the soul-world, bright with the mingled halo of memory and love. And in the midnight, the awful, solemn midnight, how we strive to look into the spirit-land, and fathom the mysterious, the unknown! How we long to soar above the stars, and grapple with the knowledge of angels! How the mind reels and bends beneath the weight of thought!

"My sister and Agnes entered the room where I was sitting without observing me. They had evidently been conversing together on some exciting topic, and I heard my sister say, 'He shall be rid of this foolish passion. Shame on Walter, that he is not more a man!' I was about to leave my seat when Agnes spoke.

"'Dear Margaret,' said she to my sister, 'Walter does not know how fondly I love him. Oh, what would I not do to win his love in return!'

"I was shocked at this bold avowal. However

much a man may be gratified by the love of a beautiful woman, his better nature revolts at hearing the declaration of passion come first from her. It is like stripping the moss from the bud of the rose, like crushing the fragrance from the dewy violet.

"I was certainly in an unenviable, and, as it appeared to me, a dishonourable position; but motives of delicacy towards Agnes now prevented my disclosing myself, and I drew further behind the curtain that draped the window.

"'Do you think, Margaret,' said Agnes, resuming the conversation, 'that Christine really loves your brother? I do not. How could she permit him to leave her without knowing when he might return? Why did she not accompany him—if not with her father's consent, why then without it? No, no, she does not love Walter as she ought. You remember your telling me what your brother said about her loveliness when he placed the half-blown rose in Christine's hair.'

"Without waiting for a reply, Agnes turned to the piano and commenced singing—

"'Oh, take from thy clustering curls the rose,
Why, false one, why should it linger there?
Thou hast taught another his trust to repose;
He has placed that bud in thy golden hair.
But ere the perfume has left the flower,
Thou wilt tire like the child of his gilded toy,
And tiring thus thou wilt scorn the hour
That brings to thy feet the enamoured boy

"'Then take the rose from thy polished brow,
No emblem it of a love like thine;
'Tis the flower of love, and thy heartless vow
Has never been breathed at feeling's shrine.
Thy soul has ne'er burned with love's ardent flame,
Thy smiles they are false, thy words like the air;
Thou wouldst crush that bud if *another* came;
Then take it now from thy golden hair.'

"There was a pause of a few moments, when my sister spoke.

"'Agnes,' said she, 'it is impossible that Walter should see you daily, and remain indifferent towards you. In a short time he will forget this silly Swedish romance. You know his tastes and his prejudices, and can easily flatter the one, and be careful not to offend the other.'

"'Margaret, I have no doubt that Christine received the attentions of Carl before she saw your brother. Trust me, she was only coquetting with Walter, and it would not surprise me to hear that she had married her first admirer.'

"'Heaven grant she may! Touch Walter's pride, and you are sure to conquer his passion. Now, Aggy, sing me that song you wrote when Walter, in a flight of sentimentalism, once asked, "Do you ever think of me?"'

"Agnes again played an accompaniment as she sang—

"'What! think of thee? Yes, in the morn's early hour,
Thou art first in my memory's sight;

"'I tremble and wonder that day has no power
O'er the visions that haunt me by night.

"'What! think of thee? Yes, when amid the gay throng,
When the lovely and happy are near,
I sigh for thy glance, and in sadness I long
For thine accents to fall on mine ear.

"'What! think of thee? Yes, every moment I live,
Be it joyous or saddening to me,
I see thee, I hear thee; may Heaven forgive
If too often I think upon thee.'

"The song ceased. The girls left the room together, and I was once more alone. The doubts of Christine's constancy, suggested by Agnes, were insupportable; while the knowledge of Agnes's love for me bewildered and left me undecided how to act.

"At first I thought to tell my sister that I had overheard their conversation, but this would have been embarrassing to us all, so I kept the secret in my own breast, and met her and Agnes with my usual demeanour.

"A twelvemonth had passed since my return home, and during that time I had received but one letter from Christine. I almost believed that she had forgotten me, and pride urged that I should forget her. Alas! how hard it is to unwind the tendrils of love from around the heart—to cast from us the passion we have nursed until its root is interwoven with the fibres of our life! Slowly,

slowly, we part each delicate tendril, pausing ever, and hoping that one may still be left! While there remains a vestige of hope, though it be light as the gossamer which floats upon the breeze, unsubstantial as the palace shadowed in the clouds, slowly, slowly, fibre after fibre is loosened, and the torture of the soul prolonged.

"I wrote again. Six months elapsed and brought no answer. Then came the harrowing thought that Christine was dead! All this time I was compelled to remain at home, owing to a protracted lawsuit, arising out of some business unsettled at my father's death.

"I now determined on writing to Christine's uncle in Stockholm, telling him of my love for his niece, and of the misery I endured from her continued silence. The prisoner, notching the dismal days and nights on the stick in his lonely cell, could not have felt the time drag more wearily than did I, while waiting an answer to my letter. At last it came. It was from Gustave Bernstein. Trembling with agitation, I ran my eye over the sheet until it rested on the name of Christine. At the perusal of that one paragraph my sight seemed blasted. Christine was married to Carl! It was as if the light had been suddenly blotted from the sky; as if the blackness of thick darkness had fallen upon me. I sat long in a state of stupor, unable to read more. When I did, I learned that

Christine, in compliance with the earnest wish of her father, had consented to marry his favourite, and that, at the request of the bride, whose health was delicate, the marriage had been a private one. Here, then, was the end of my hopes. The last tendril was broken! the last fibre rooted out! I thought so then, but who can fathom the depths of the human heart?

"Calling all my pride to my aid, I determined on forgetting the woman who could thus forget herself. I was ashamed of the wretchedness I had suffered on her account, unworthy as I deemed her of my love. But the arrow had not been withdrawn; it still rankled, though for a while its point was dulled against the shield of pride.

"I now tried to think that all my preconceived ideas of woman's truthfulness and loveliness of character were overdrawn; that those ideas were merely the fruits of a too romantic imagination.

"But, if one woman had deceived me, another loved me. I had heard it from her own lips, when she knew not that I was by to listen. And now I tried to persuade myself that it was a false delicacy which had so shocked me on hearing Agnes's avowal. With this tempest of passion raging within and dethroning reason, I talked to Agnes of love. Of love! what desecration in such a mad, heartless use of that holy word! My sister's delight knew no bounds. Agnes openly showed her preference

for me, at the risk, very frequently, of driving me from her; but of this she knew nothing. Nearer and nearer to the vortex—Agnes and I were to be married! Sure that I was about to seal my misery, I was yet reckless. I thought by that deed to prove to my heart that I had forgotten Christine!

"Preparations were making for our approaching nuptials. Friends congratulated us, and Agnes was more brilliantly beautiful than ever. One morning I was sitting beside my affianced, discussing with apparent interest, but far-away thoughts, the very important question whether there should be two bridesmaids or three. For my own part, I cared but little whether there were any at all, but, as usual, I yielded the point to Agnes, who had previously decided on three. While we were yet talking, my servant handed me a package which had just been left for me. My hand shook nervously when, on taking it, I recognised the writing of Gustave Bernstein. At that moment my sister entered, and I left Agnes and her together, while, with a vague presentiment of evil, I retired to my room. A year had passed since I received the letter announcing Christine's marriage, and I supposed that all correspondence with my Swedish friends had for ever ceased. What then could be the import of these letters? for it was evident that several were enclosed in the envelope.

"Impatiently, yet fearingly, I broke the seal. The first I opened was from Mr. Bernstein. Christine was dead! Oh, how my old fondness welled up within my heart, and would not be kept back! Christine was dead! The day that I had seen her in her virgin purity, renewing her baptismal vows at the altar—the blessed hours we had spent together in the quiet parsonage—the flowers we had gathered on the hills—the songs she had sung to me at eventide—the books we had read in the quaint old library—the tears she shed at parting—the blessing—the farewell! There they were as things of yesterday; there they were, remembered—worshipped—filling my heart to overflowing. There was no thought of her estrangement, no proud repelling of my newly-awakened tenderness; ah, no, Christine was dead!

"I know not what length of time elapsed before I again examined the package. When I did so, I found that several of the letters were my own; they were those I had sent to Christine. I took up another. How nervously did I press it to my lips. *Her* hand had traced these characters—the hand which had been clasped in mine—the hand which was cold in death—Christine's hand had written it! Did I read aright? Again and again my eye wandered over the lines.

"'I am dying, Walter, and I trust it is not wrong now to tell you how I have sorrowed over

the past. O Walter! why did you conceal aught from me—from me, who opened to you the inmost thoughts of my soul? Had you told me all at first, what a world of misery might have been spared me! Ah! I would not have so wept over the promise to be yours in time and eternity. Honour would have forbidden that promise to be made. When I first learned that your plighted troth belonged to another, the tidings fell like an ice-bolt on my heart. And when I was conjured, even by the love I bore you, to take pity on another, whose love was strong as mine—one whom you were bound by solemn engagements to make your wife—then, though my life-cord had broken in the struggle, I resolved to cast you from me, not in anger, not in disdain, but in pity and in grief. You but saw the weaker, the more yielding part of my nature; you knew not, Walter, how I could nerve myself for a high task. You knew not how a woman, frail in body, could be strong in soul. Carefully I banished every fond thought of you which sprang unbidden in my breast. Were you not the betrothed of another? And would it not have been sinful longer to regard you with love? My life was henceforth to be devoted to my father's happiness. You knew how earnestly he wished me to marry Carl. When I had schooled my heart to think of you as the husband of the woman whose love you had first won, I yielded to my

father's wishes; not lightly, not from motives of pique towards you, but to soothe the last moments of my parent's life; to see him die happy in the thought that he left me to the protection of his beloved ward. And Carl knew all, all, and yet, with a love surpassing knowledge, he made me his wife.

"'And now was my soul strengthened and purified by close communion with his. To assist him in his labours, to cheer him in his solitude, to look with him for the 'rest which remaineth for the people of God,' all these were sweet to me. Honourable motives, dutiful actions, brought their sure reward. My father's spirit could look approvingly upon his child.

"'In the midst of this life of usefulness, Carl was called suddenly away. The blow stunned me, but I knew that it came from a friendly hand. My heart still needed the baptism of suffering to wash it for heaven.

"'And now that I am dying, Walter, I wish you to know the cause of my silence; the reason why I did not keep my promise. I wish no blot to rest on my memory when I am gone. I have thought, too—vainly perhaps—that you might be happier if you knew no feeling of unkindness towards you had ever been harboured in my breast.

"'Your letters, and the letters of her who is now your wife, you will receive with this. I have

prayed for you both, Walter, that grace and strength might be given to assist you in bearing one another's burdens in the journey of life. I have prayed for you and for myself, that we might be permitted to enter the mansions prepared for the loved of the Father. Will you not pray for it, too, Walter? Ah! in the strange and sad vicissitudes of daily life, in the awful hour of approaching dissolution, what can we frail creatures do but pray? Farewell, Walter, and may your last moments be tranquil as those of

"'CHRISTINE.'

"I was bewildered; my brain became confused, and I lost all consciousness when I had read Christine's letter. How long I remained in this state of stupor I know not, but I was aroused by a knocking at the door. It was my sister. She told me that Agnes had returned home, wondering at my strange conduct in not coming back to them, after my abrupt departure. Agnes! she had been totally forgotten. I told my sister that I was not well, and would not leave my room until morning. When she had gone, I once more read the mournful breathings which death had wrung from the heart of her I loved. I turned from them to look at that which had caused my misery. Some demon had been envious of my happiness. Tossing aside my own letters, I took up one, the handwriting of which seemed familiar to me, but at the instant I

could not recollect where I had seen it before. As I read, light dawned upon me. It had been written by Agnes! She told of my engagement to her previous to my going abroad, and with all the eloquent pleadings she could so well employ, begged Christine not to answer my letters. Appealing to her honour, her generosity, her womanly tenderness, she wove a tissue of falsehoods so artfully together that no one, pure-minded as Christine, could dream of their being untrue. And it was this woman, so deceitful, so base, that I, in my madness, was about to make my wife!

"At an early hour the next day I called upon Agnes. She met me, radiant with smiles, and her dark eyes flashing with the consciousness of superb beauty. I looked on her with abhorrence, and a feeling akin to hate took possession of my soul. She perceived my disturbed manner, and began to rally me on my strange appearance. For some moments I dared not trust myself to speak, lest in my bitterness I should forget what was due to her sex. Extending my hand, I held before her the letter she had written to Christine, and hoarsely murmured—

"'Agnes, do you know this?'

"As she looked on it her face became pale and terror-stricken, but immediately recovering herself, she answered—

"'No!'

"'Agnes,' said I, regarding her with a fixed and penetrating look, 'why deny what your conscience tells you is true? Wretched woman, how could you thus work the misery of one who was as far above you as the angels are above us?'

"Again Agnes attempted a denial, in a louder and firmer tone than before.

"'Add not falsehood to falsehood,' I exclaimed; 'heap not infamy on infamy. From this moment we are strangers.'

"'Walter Drayton, you dare not *now* go back; I say you dare not!'

"'I dare, and I will. No power on earth could make me call *you* wife. Tell what you please about the breaking of our engagement, I shall never stoop to contradict it.'

"For a moment Agnes quailed beneath my just resentment; then, giving way to her excited feelings, she towered a very Medea in her wrath. I left her, and in a month after was on my way to Europe.

"I visited Gustave Bernstein, and from him obtained Christine's miniature. I wept at her grave —wept that she had died without knowing the truth. For many years I was a wanderer. On my return I learned that Agnes was married. Her husband was ugly, old, decrepid, but possessed of immense wealth. His wife despised him, and he feared her. Leading a life of splendid misery, un-

loved and unloving, Agnes was reaping the bitter fruits of her treachery and deceit.

"I made my home with my youngest sister, and in her happy domestic circle learned to prize the blessings which had been spared me. But though, in seeking to promote the happiness of others, I have found peace for myself; though five and twenty years have elapsed since I opened that package, never can I forget my utter desolation of heart when I learned that Christine was dead."

Dear uncle Walter, how he had suffered and sorrowed, and how bravely he had borne himself under his secret grief! My warm tears fell fast upon his hand as I pressed it to my lips. Parting my hair on my forehead, he bent and kissed me without speaking; then carefully gathering his treasures, he left me alone to think again and again of Uncle Walter's tale of love.

THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

Martin Greene was a thrifty, industrious farmer, living on the old homestead left from father to son for three successive generations; yearly tilling the soil which gave him back no niggardly reward for his labour, and blessing God for the ever-bountiful harvest.

No fields bore better grain, no orchards finer fruit, than those of Martin Greene. In kind, plump, pleasant-faced Mrs. Greene, the farmer had indeed a true help-meet. She made the sweetest butter and the best cheese in the country, and her well-filled presses, groaning under the weight of home-made linen, and home-woven cloth, were the wonder of chance city visitors, and the envy of not-so-well-to-do-in-the-world housewives. The eldest daughter, Hetty, was, as her mother said, "a clever, sensible girl, her right hand man," as the good woman oddly expressed it. Hetty was

in truth a right hand to her parent. In summer she rose with the sun, and tripped away with bench and pail to milk the well-fed cows. She worked briskly at the churn, and gathered the firm curd, and pressed the cheese, sometimes infusing it with the juice of sage, and at others making those delicious cream-cakes which are nowhere so tempting as on a farmer's table. Well might mother Greene call Hetty her "right hand man."

Two boys had died in their infancy, and the farmer had but one other child besides Hetty. This was Lizzy, who had opened her blue, wondering eyes just ten years after her sister first saw the light.

Lizzy was the pet and plaything of the house. Her pretty little lips, like a half-parted rose-bud, where the bee lingers lovingly, were always upturned for a kiss. The soft, shining curls shadowed her pure forehead and dimpled cheek, and floated over her round, white neck like a stray mesh of golden sunbeams. Ever singing like a bird, ever skipping like her own pet lamb, was bright, gleesome, loving-hearted Lizzy Greene; and thus passed her years of childhood, dancing through the meadows, tossed to and fro among the hay, laughing at her own pleasant fancies till all near her caught the spirit of her innocent mirth, and laughed with her without well knowing why. As she grew older, and strength and knowledge came with

years, she was still a privileged being, her mother and sister working on cheerfully, sometimes wondering why Lizzy did not come and help them, but always finding a ready apology for her remissness. They both knew that Lizzy's sensitive nature could ill bear rebuke, and they loved her too well, their petted one, to bring a tear to her eye, or a pang to her heart. Then she was so delicate, so lady-like, it would be a pity not to give her every advantage; and after much cogitation the worthy farmer and his wife thought it best to send their darling to a boarding-school, where she might receive a finished education.

It was a sad parting, that of Lizzy from her home. Again and again did she clasp her arms about her mother's neck, and kiss her weeping sister, and look round on each familiar thing as if she were never to behold it more. But partings, however painful, must have an end, and at last Lizzy and her father were seated in the covered wagon which was to convey them part of their journey.

Greatly awed was Lizzy when introduced to the presence of Madame Clinquante, the stylish lady who presided over the seminary for young ladies in Brookville, and with fluttering heart, and thoughts in strange confusion, the young country girl almost wished she could return home with her father. With a slightly supercilious air, the fashionable

instructress glanced from honest Mr. Greene to his daughter. Horror of horrors, how antiquated the cut of his coat, and how far behind the mode the shape of his daughter's bonnet! But as the good man made no objections to her extravagant charges, and placed his daughter wholly under her control, Madame Clinquante thought it as well to conceal the feelings caused by their rustic appearance, and graciously condescended to receive "Miss Elizabeth" as a pupil.

How frozen and formal everything appeared to Lizzy after her father's departure! When she made her appearance at the tea-table, and glanced timidly at the stiff-looking, premature women, who were staring at her short-waisted gingham dress, her tears began to flow, silently at first; but when she saw one of the young ladies pull another by the sleeve, point to where she sat, and strive to suppress a titter, poor Lizzy wept outright, and longed to be seated by her sister Hetty, at their own fireside. A long time elapsed before the hitherto untrammeled girl, who had been accustomed to bound like a young fawn, could be trained to walk with the soft, mincing pace practised by her schoolmates, or to attain that perfection of the Grecian bend, once absurdly looked upon as graceful. Her voice, too, which had ever been clear and musical, must now be sunk to the lowest tones, at times not more than half audible.

But none of this frigid schooling chilled her heart, which bounded as warmly beneath her fashionably-lengthened silk boddice, as it had done under her short-waisted gingham dress. Yet Lizzy was changed, and, almost unknown to herself, placed an undue value on advantages in themselves merely accidental. Once or twice only had Mrs. Greene and Hetty accompanied the farmer on his visits to the boarding-school, and on these occasions Madame Clinquante's manner was thoroughly calculated to impress them with her great superiority, particularly when she asked them to stay for dinner, and when a few departures from established etiquette made Lizzy blush for her mother and sister. But Mrs. Greene thought only of the advantages conferred upon her daughter by being under the charge of such a lady, and vague visions of future greatness for her darling floated through her brain.

At stated periods Madame Clinquante's reception-rooms were thrown open to visitors, and then were the young ladies dressed in a showy manner, and called upon to exhibit their various acquirements before the admiring guests. What a field of display! What a school for vanity was here! It was no private examination, where impartial judges might decide upon the advancement of the pupils in knowledge truly useful. It proceeded not from the kind desire to charm a home circle

by the quiet exercise of graceful accomplishments. No, it was a jealous struggle as to who should make themselves most agreeable to the young gentlemen who turned the pages of their music, or were their partners in the dance, and by whom they were praised and flattered in the language of silly and empty compliment. And in such a school as the seminary for young ladies at Brookville, and under such an instructress as Madame Clinquante, Lizzy Greene finished her education.

We have said before that Lizzy's heart was as warm as ever, and on her return home she seemed unchanged. But soon the constant work, work, work, which she saw on every side became distasteful to her, and instead of accompanying her mother to the dairy, or her father to the orchard, she would sit for hours at the piano, which had found its way into the best room, and sigh for the artificial stimulus that once roused her energies into action. Ah, Lizzy, Lizzy! why did your too indulgent parents spoil a country girl with a city lady's finished education?

CHAPTER II.

"Well, I do wish our Lizzy would take a liking to Morris Wilson," said Mrs. Greene to her husband, as they were walking together in the lane which led from their house; "he's such a good, steady young man, and owns such a fine farm, and then she'd be so near us; do you try and persuade her to it."

"There is no use in trying to persuade her, I fear," replied the farmer with a sigh; "Lizzy's not like the girl she was, and Morris Wilson is too plain and blunt-like to suit her notions."

"But he is so kind-hearted, and honest, and upright, and he raises better grain than any of the young men about here. I'm sure he would make her an excellent husband, for I believe he loves the very ground she walks on."

"Yes, I think he does, and I often pity him when he is trying to do little things he thinks will please her, and she looks so coldly on him. Once I did hope to have Morris for a son-in-law, and I thought Lizzy had a kind of bashful liking for

him, but if she ever had it is all over now, and sorry am I; for as you say, wife, he would make her an excellent husband."

"Well, if I thought Lizzy stood a chance of marrying a gentleman, and living in a style as they did at Madame *Clinkee's*, I'd not say another word about Morris, for I think somehow Lizzy is not well calculated for a farmer's wife, though I've heard Morris say he'd never want his wife to work, only just to superintend like."

"And without our Lizzy pays more attention to what is going on about the house, I'm afraid she will never be able even to superintend. It was hardly right to send her so long to that boarding-school."

"It was done for the best, and there's no knowing what good may come of it yet. But I'm sorry she don't take more after her sister, for if it wa'n't for the help I get from Hetty, I should never be able to manage and keep things to rights."

On returning from their walk, farmer Greene and his wife were surprised at seeing a dashing-looking equipage standing near the paling in front of their house. On entering they found Lizzy all smiles and blushes, talking to a strange young gentleman, whom she introduced to her parents as Mr. Vinton, a friend of Madame Clinquante.

Mr. Vinton informed the good people that he was travelling for the summer, and finding himself

in their neighbourhood, he could not resist the temptation of calling on Miss Elizabeth, whose acquaintance he had made during her last year's residence at Brookville.

Charmed with his affable and pleasing manners, farmer Greene shook him cordially by the hand, and pressed him to stay for dinner, which was then in the course of preparation. The invitation was politely declined by the visitor, while at the same time he carelessly remarked, "that he might remain a few days in the vicinity, and trusted he should have the pleasure of seeing them again," then shaking hands with the old people, and bowing to Lizzy, Mr. Vinton took his leave.

That night as usual, Morris Wilson was at Mr. Greene's, and Lizzy's manner towards him was colder than ever. They were all seated under the front porch, and somehow one after another stole away, until Morris and Lizzy were left alone together, she absorbed in thought, with her eyes fixed on the cloudless full moon sailing calmly through the sky, and wholly unconscious of her companion's presence. Morris had never directly spoken to her of the wish that lay nearest his heart. He was in love, and true love ever begets a feeling of deference towards the object beloved, and a lowly opinion of one's own merits. He knew himself wanting in the polish to which Lizzy had for the last three years been accustomed, and

since her return he had been on the point of taking lessons from a travelling dancing-master; nay, he went so far as to buy a flute, hoping some day to delight his idol with his melodious music. Simple-hearted Morris Wilson!

He was, as we have said, left alone with her he loved. How beautiful she looked in the softening moonlight, with her white dress, and the knot of heart's-ease in her bosom! Yes, he would tell her of his love, of his hopes, of his fears, and he would plead that she might one day be his own—his treasured one, his wife. Oh, how his heart bounded at the thought! to call *her* wife! That name, so bright with heart-truth, with happiness, so full of every endearing, every tender and holy joy that clusters around home. Yes, he would ask Lizzy to be his wife!

But Morris was seized with a nervous trepidation when he laid his hand on hers, his tongue faltered, and he could but articulate, "Lizzy!"

The young girl turned, and, looking full upon him, withdrew her hand. "Lizzy!" again murmured Morris; for a few moments there was an embarrassing silence, and then, summoning his fast-failing courage, briefly and truthfully the lover urged his suit.

"Mr. Wilson, I am sorry to hear this. I always looked upon you as a friend of my parents, and in no other light can I ever regard you."

"In no other light! O Lizzy, do not say so, I am willing to wait, and if we were more together you might think differently. I know I have not the refinement that you have, Lizzy, but you could make me what you wish, for I love you with my whole soul; I do, indeed, Lizzy. Stay only one moment longer, don't turn so coldly from me."

"Morris Wilson!" Morris raised his eyes to the speaker. Like dew-drops on the rose-leaf, the tears were trembling on Lizzy's cheek, and the lover gained new hope.

"I thought you could not be so cruel. You will bid me wait, will you not, Lizzy? Oh! if you knew how fondly I have loved you from your childhood, from the time that I, a great lubberly boy, carried your satchel to the school-house, and contrived to be in the way when you were returning home, that I might find an excuse for lifting you over the stones, and carrying you round the pond in the meadow, and how my heart beat when I caught you up in my arms, and tossed you into the hay, while you were shaking the curls over your eyes and playing bo-peep with me ——"

"Do not speak thus, Morris; you grieve me. I would not willingly pain any one, much less you, who have always been as a brother to me; be to me a friend. I know this sounds coldly; well, then, I will not ask it. Dislike me, if you will, Morris, but try and forget that you have ever cared

for me, and I may yet see you happy with one who is worthy of you, and who can return your love."

"And is this final, Lizzy? can you give me no hope? or, tell me—do you care for another?"

"This latter is a question you have no right to ask," said the girl proudly; "no, I can give you no hope."

"And I can give no other woman my heart. Yes, I will be your friend, Lizzy; for, God help me, this love has grown too deep ever to be rooted out!"

Lizzy was touched by the sorrowful tone of the speaker, and with impulsive earnestness she clasped Morris's hand in hers, and raised it to her lips. It was the error of a moment, and before she was aware of it, he whom she had refused as a lover pressed his lips to her forehead, and sought to circle her waist.

"Morris, Morris, I did wrong, I should have left you at once; it is my fault that you have thus forgotten yourself; when I said that I could give you no hope, why did I allow my conduct to belie my words? O Morris, I did wrong, but I could not help it. I saw you suffering and sought to soothe you; but it was wrong, Morris, it was wrong!"

"And so it is all over, and this may be our last meeting, Lizzy, for I cannot trust myself in your presence. Now Heaven give me help!"

Lizzy went up to her little chamber with a heavy heart. She watched the figure of Morris as it retreated in the distance, and wept to think she was the cause of his unhappiness. His pleadings had recalled bygone acts of kindness, which she had always received as if coming from a brother; and now when he told her the happiness of his life was in her keeping, she could give him but her chary friendship for his wealth of love. What woman of keen sensibilities but would be pained under circumstances like these? How could she look with cold indifference upon the man who in the warm abandonment of a true heart had proffered her his all? With the heartless coquette, such devotion but ministers sweet incense to her vanity, and the woman devoid of principle may triumph in her conquest over hearts, and boast her refusal of proffered hands. Lizzy was neither, and but for the instinctive delicacy which told her it was wrong, she could have wept with Morris, and in the tenderest manner have striven to soothe the sorrow of her disappointed lover.

Poor Morris Wilson! for years his hopes had centred in one object. For this he had toiled late and early, for this his grain was the finest, and his meadow the smoothest, for this his farm-house was the neatest, and his paling the whitest, in the country round. For this the fragrant honeysuckle, and the heavy-scented syringa, and the

tall rose of Sharon, bloomed beside his door. For this the dove-cote had been hung in the poplar before the porch, and the rose-bushes in the garden had been grafted, and the stepping-stones placed in the brook, and the rustic-arbour reared on the hill beneath the sun-lit branches of the twin-elms. All had been for this—for this !—for what ? —that Lizzy might be the mistress, the queen of his world of home !

What wonder, when he found that all had been for naught — when he knew that Lizzy's hand would never feed the doves, nor pull the flowers, when he knew that she would never sit beneath the porch, as his own, his loved and loving wife— what wonder that Morris Wilson turned in bitterness from the many objects of his care ?

CHAPTER III.

Mrs. Vinton was the very pattern of amiability and courtesy to her equals, but proud, haughty, and arrogant to her inferiors. Married to an easy, good-tempered man, who inherited a large property, she was enabled to gratify every caprice which her ambition or her vanity suggested. After half a lifetime devoted to folly, finery, and fashion at home, she determined on going abroad. A few months were spent in posting through Germany and Italy, when she settled down for a four years' residence in Paris, and here the crowning glory was given to her "vaulting ambition," by the marriage of her daughter to a *roué* and a title. On her return to Boston, her increased *hauteur* of manner made her unbearable to those who were in any way dependent on her, and her frequent allusions to "my daughter, the countess," rendered her the secret laughing-stock of half her acquaintance.

Alfred Vinton was, like his father, extremely

good-natured, and, having a bountiful supply of money always at command, was easily initiated into the *liberties* of *jeune* France, and learned to quaff his wine and bet his gold with perfect freedom. But a habit was forming, a love for the Circean draught of pleasure, which, if not resisted in time, will bind the strongest in bands of iron.

Though little more than twenty, in the very spring-time of his life, the dawning of his manhood, Alfred Vinton was fast becoming a debauchee. Except in a certain air of lassitude, usually dispelled by the strong morning stimulant, except in this, and an appearance of being older than he really was, no outward signs yet told of the nightly orgies which were sapping his life to its foundation.

It was not long after his return from Paris with his parents that he accompanied his mother to Madame Clinquante's, on a visit to an orphan cousin who had been placed in the academy at Brookville. An invitation to one of Madame's soirées was declined by Mrs. Vinton, but accepted by her son, who, after a brief introduction, chatted and danced during the greater part of the evening with Lizzy Greene. The freshness of this young girl's mind, unhackneyed as she was in the ways of fashionable life, the frankness and warmth of soul that breathed in her every word and action, were in such charming contrast with the affected and conventional manners of the young ladies by

whom she was surrounded, that Alfred's heart was taken captive unawares, and he became a frequent visitor at Madame Clinquante's until Lizzy left the seminary.

After her departure he resolved to see her again, and trust to chance for the success of his wooing, and thus resolving, it was not long before he took up his abode in farmer Greene's vicinity. He soon ingratiated himself into the good graces of the old people, and Mrs. Greene was delighted with his marked attention to Lizzy; even the good farmer was so far brought under the influence of his wife, as to think that, after all, the girl might do better than by taking Morris Wilson for a husband. Could Alfred Vinton have borne away Lizzy from her home without the promise of making her his wife, he would not have scrupled to do so, but he knew this to be impossible; Lizzy loved him, but hers was a love that would not stoop to degradation. One day the old gentleman spoke to Alfred on the subject of his daily visits, and with a father's solicitude wished to know whether Mr. or Mrs. Vinton knew of his attentions to Lizzy. The young man said they did, and he reluctantly confessed that his mother urged his return home, as she never could consent to such an alliance.

Farmer Greene was as proud in his own way as Mrs. Vinton was in hers. He declared that no child of his should creep into a family clan-

destinely, that he considered his Lizzy had come of as good and honest people as the best of them, and he thought her quite as much of a lady as any he had seen at Brookville. To all this Alfred assented, and endeavoured to conciliate the good man by saying, that if Lizzy were once his wife, and could she be seen by his mother, he doubted not that lady would be proud to receive her as a daughter. But this would not satisfy Mr. Greene, and all further visiting at the house was prohibited.

Yet Alfred would not thus be baffled; he contrived occasionally to meet Lizzy in her walks, and to have notes conveyed to her through his servant. In vain did Lizzy, fearful of the weakness of her own loving heart, beg Alfred to leave the place. But he knew too well his vantage-ground, and pleaded with such earnestness that she whom he idolized would allow him to meet her once more at the old trysting-place, that at last Lizzy's resolution gave way, and, with trembling steps and remorseful conscience, she went to her first stolen interview.

"I cannot come again, do not ask it, Alfred," she replied to the urgent entreaties of her lover; "already am I lowered by thus meeting you without the knowledge of my parents; it is so humiliating to act a falsehood; oh, do not urge me, Alfred. I am but a poor weak girl, and when I see

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you so grieved at the thought of parting, all my good resolves seem to fail me. Now that I have laid open my heart, and let you see its weakness, be generous, do not urge me, Alfred."

But Alfred's love was no holy, self-sacrificing passion. He did urge Lizzy, and he plied her with sophisms to show that there could be no harm in her meeting him but *once* again, and soon moonlight and starlight saw Lizzy Greene at the end of the orchard where it joined the wood, seated on the trunk of a fallen tree, with her hand close locked in that of her lover!

"Why what makes Lizzy stay so long at Susan Jansen's to-night?" said Mrs. Greene, returning from the door where she had long stood watching for her daughter. "I didn't know as they was going to have any company to-day, and she's not been to home since two o'clock. I guess you'd better go and fetch her, Mr. Greene."

"Yes, I have been thinking about going this half-hour, I'll not be gone long, so just tell Hetty to keep the bone-set tea warm, for my cold is getting rather troublesome."

After a long time, as it appeared to Mrs. Greene and Hetty, the farmer returned—he was alone!

"Goodness! where's Lizzy? what made you leave her any longer?" Mr. Greene made no reply, but tottered to a chair: his face was pale and his looks disordered.

"Father," said Hetty, as she took his hat which he held listlessly in his hand, "father, what has happened? where is Lizzy?"

"I don't know; she has not been at Jansen's since three o'clock."

"Mercy on me!" exclaimed Mrs. Greene, "why didn't you go to Smith's and Tompkins'? She may have dropped in to see the girls."

"I did. She was in neither place, and I fear, I fear——"

"What? what? tell me quickly, what do you fear, Martin?"

"That she has gone with young Vinton. George Jansen told me he saw him pass their house not ten minutes before Lizzy left it, and Seth Tompkins said, when he was coming from mill, young Vinton's carriage passed him with a lady in it, but the driver made the horses fly so fast, he couldn't get a sight of her face."

"My God!" said the poor heart-stricken mother, "our Lizzy gone away from us?"

It was too true. She, the petted, the caressed, the lady-bird of the household, the idolized of her parents' hearts, the pride of her country home, she had forsaken all to go with Alfred Vinton, and become the dweller in a city!

CHAPTER IV.

At the window of an apartment which looked towards the west stood a female watching the broad, red disc of the setting sun, as it gradually neared the verge of the horizon. Lower and lower it sank. The molten masses of clouds it had fused and flung abroad in glowing beauty, were fast assuming that dull gray, leaden hue, with which the last vestige of fading twilight deepens into night. One narrow belt of fire alone remained—remained as if it knew an anxious face were watching its decline—as if it knew that heart-throbs increased in agony as its brightness was withdrawn. Lower and lower—it quivers—it is gone! oh, fondly superstitious human heart, why link thy hopes with such an omen?

For awhile the female stood, statue-like, with clasped hands, and eyes gazing on the far-off heavens.

"O God! it is all over. I said that his return before the setting sun should be an omen of

good—a pledge that he would yet redeem himself —an earnest that his word was sacred. He is not here. It is all over! oh, merciful One! there is no hope!"

Why are there moments in life when the strongest-minded yield to a superstitious dread? Why is it that at times there is a chill creeping of the blood, an involuntary shudder, as if the wing of a spirit had touched us in passing by? Whence the awe that we feel when left at night alone with the dead? We know that they cannot look on us in anger—they cannot speak to us unkindly—they cannot loosen their icy bands, and overpower our weak natures with the shock of seeing the dead start suddenly to life. We know all this, and yet we tread softly, as if afraid of awaking them, we approach reverently as into a pure and holy presence, and we turn away tremblingly, and seek the society of those who yet tabernacle in the flesh.

Why is all this? Is there but the veil of sense drawn between the outer world and the world unseen? Why do some look to the blooming or withering of a flower, some to the appearing or disappearing of a star, and others to the rising or setting of the sun, as auguries of evil or of good? We cannot fathom why! We but know that it is so, and that by nine out of ten, in this matter-of-fact world, it is called superstition.

Slowly the female turned from the window and

seated herself near the fire. Its ruddy light beamed full upon her face, which was very pale and sad, and the cheerful glow fell on her small hands as if wishing to warm the poor heart over which they were clasped. A servant entered, placed lights upon the table, and silently withdrew. The apartments had that air of simple elegance which always betokens the residence of a gentle spirit. The snowy embroidery blended its gossamer folds with the soft blue damask which curtained the windows, and fell in wavy beauty to the floor. There were small, antique-shaped porcelain vases, filled with fragrant flowers; there were books, enriched with the rarest dreams of the painter and the poet; and there was music, waiting but the touch to gush in sweetness from its airy cell. And she, the mistress of this beautiful home—cannot all these treasures rouse her from the painful reverie into which she has fallen? Ah, no! Memory and conscience are at work. She sees her own fond parents grieving sorely, even as she has grieved over her own dead child. She knows that she has forsaken them in their old age, and therefore has no claim on the rewards promised to the dutiful and obedient. She has been waiting and watching for him with whom she fled, and the omen has been of evil, which her fondly credulous heart had hoped would be of good. And now when she longs for the old familiar voices of her early home, when her heart

is panting for one loving breast on which to lean and weep her sorrow, Elizabeth Vinton sits alone with memory and with conscience!

Two years have passed since Lizzy Greene was tempted by her lover to leave her father's house. When Alfred Vinton thought they were beyond the reach of pursuit, he made the weeping girl his wife; but it was a secret marriage, and was to remain such until his mother could be induced to receive Lizzy as her daughter-in-law.

Alfred vainly supposed that his mother's anger would be of short duration, and that when she found that he was actually married, her pride would give way, and he be reinstated in her favour. He had therefore taken Lizzy to Boston, and placed her in lodgings, where she was to remain until the favourable moment arrived. But day after day he met his wife's tearful inquiries with the same answer: his mother was inexorable. Lizzy tried hard to bear up under her trial, which was now assuming a most serious aspect. The people in the house where she lodged grew coldly civil to her. If she came unawares upon a group of ladies talking together, they would bow formally and leave the place. She felt like a shunned thing, yet she knew not why she was so. At length some vague rumours reached her, and with a shudder she learned that the breath of suspicion had sullied her fair fame, that she was looked upon as Mr. Vinton's

paramour! Oh, agony of agonies to a young, pure heart! Oh, torture, bordering on madness, to the woman in whose spirit a lofty honour sits enthroned! Charitable in her judgment of others, severe alone to herself, had another been placed in her situation, had another even been what she was suspected of being, Lizzy would have pitied the erring one, and forborne to add to her humiliation. But compassion for the individual can exist with abhorrence of the crime, and often the woman who grieves most deeply for the errors of her sex, would be well-nigh maddened at the imputation of such error to herself. Thus was it with Lizzy, and for a fortnight, while her husband had gone as she supposed on business to a neighbouring city, did she writhe under her disgrace. On Alfred's return, she timidly ventured to inform him of what had occurred during his absence, and begged him no longer to keep their marriage a secret from the world. He made but little reply, save that they would soon leave their present abode; and in a short time he took her to an elegantly-furnished house, of which he told her they and their servants were to be the sole occupants.

Months passed away in total seclusion, and Lizzy forgot her sorrows in anticipation of the fond maternal joys that might soon be hers. But ere the mother's consciousness after suffering was fully restored, ere she could press her darling's soft lip

to hers, and feel its warm breath upon her cheek, and nestle its little head in her bosom, ere she could fold it to her heart and say, "God bless thee, my baby-love," the young soul had flitted back to paradise.

Fast on the footsteps of life followed the tread of death. One glance on the new world which it had entered, one hopeless cry of suffering, one convulsive throe, and it was gone! The mother's heart had lost its dearest jewel, but another star was in the sky. The mother's ear had lost its sweetest music, but the banded cherubim was listening to another harp. Mourn not, O thou bereft! thy baby "is an angel now!" Ah! it is not in the first burst of passionate grief that the childless mother can cease to mourn. Her face is covered and they think her sleeping, but she has turned away to hide her sorrow, and to "water her couch with tears." In the solemn hush of the lonely hours of night, she presses her hands convulsively upon her breast and sobs—"oh, that it lay here!" Even long after others have forgotten that she has lost a child, when all outward signs of sorrow have passed away, the mother's hand softly unfolds her infant's tiny robes, and lays them by again with gentle care; the mother's heart wanders to the green churchyard, and longs to still its beatings on the baby's quiet bed.

Poor, poor Lizzy! For a few days only did her

husband seem to feel the loss, and then with renewed zest he turned to his debasing pleasures.

It was while sorrow for the loss of her child was still most acute, that she stood watching the declining sun, and waiting the return of her husband. He had promised to be home ere nightfall, but so often had he failed in his promises that none save a wife would have looked for their fulfilment. She had once more cheated herself into the belief that he would yet fling off the vile shackles that were chaining him in the mire of sensuality, and rise a renewed, a regenerated man; and her credulous heart, after losing every firmer stay, had linked its hopes to a fallacious omen. But he came not. The clock ticked on and on, and sounded the alarm as hour after hour flew away in the dim halls of the silent past—the fire flickered feebly, no longer casting its ruddy glow full on the pale face of the watcher, but leaving it half buried in shadow—the lights were burning low in their sockets, and coldness and gloom, twin-children of sorrow and night, were brooding over the deserted home.

Towards morning Elizabeth was roused from an uneasy slumber by a noise in front of the house. Its meaning was but too well known to her, and trembling with uncontrollable agitation, she went to the front door and opened it. A speechless mass of inebriety, her husband was carried in and

laid on the sofa. It was thus he had kept his promise! "No hope! no hope!" groaned the poor heart-broken wife as she threw herself into a chair to pray and weep, and, in the fitful slumber brought on by sheer exhaustion, to dream of her lost babe, and start at the sound of her mother's voice, calling as of old for "Lizzy."

When Vinton was roused from his stupor, he informed his wife of many things which he had hitherto concealed from her. His father had died two months since, and, to the last under the entire control of his wife, had executed a will leaving his son a mere pittance. Exasperated at such treatment, Alfred remonstrated with his mother on its injustice, and swore that he would now bring his wife forward, and introduce her to his mother's friends. On this announcement Mrs. Vinton had a severe spasmodic attack, from which, however, she fortunately recovered, in time to retreat gracefully before the *mésalliance* was bruited abroad, and rather abruptly took her departure for Europe with the purpose of residing in future with "my daughter, the countess!"

And now Vinton's career was daily downward. At length disease in its most appalling form seized upon him. The glaring eye, the dilated nostril, and the compressed lip, betrayed the madman!

Ten thousand furies were haunting him. Ten thousand fiends were glaring from the ceiling—

from the corners of the room—from the curtains of the bed—and their eyes were all on him! Ten thousand loathsome venomous things were crawling on the floor and creeping up his limbs, as he vainly tried to dash them off.

"There—do you not see them?—there—there!" he would exclaim, pointing in affright to some viewless object. "Now they are on me—take them off—take them off!" and then he would sink down exhausted, the cold perspiration starting from every pore, and his whole frame trembling with the struggle. The picture is too painful, and we draw a veil over the closing scenes in the life of Alfred Vinton, who, before he had completed his twenty-fourth year, died the wretched victim of unbridled and debasing vice.

CHAPTER V.

It was winter. The scene of anticipated comfort, of amusement and enjoyment to the rich, and the dreaded harbinger of want, of sorrow and suffering to the poor. A deep snow had fallen, rendering the streets almost impassable, and then with that change so common to our climate, the sun shone brightly in the heavens, melting the white wreaths which lay upon the house-tops, and projected from the eaves. Again came change; the frost king held forth his sceptre, and the waters were stayed in their course. Onwards glided his troops, hanging glittering spears from the eaves, and bristling the trees with polished lances.

A keen, nipping wind from the north was howling down the chimneys, and moaning through the keyholes, as the inmates of a comfortable room drew closer to the large coal fire that was burning in the grate.

"I'm glad you reached here yesterday, cousin," said a young and rather pretty-looking woman, who sat rocking a child to sleep. "I'm glad you reached here yesterday, for the wind is blowing a

perfect hurricane, and I fear there will be bad travelling on the Sound to-night. How long it is since you were here before! nearly two years, is it not?"

"Yes, it is quite two years; and now perhaps I am here on a fruitless errand."

"Have you heard nothing to guide you in your search?"

"Not much, but I have resolved to make one more effort, and if I fail, will be constrained to regard the case as hopeless." A low knocking at the street-door drew the attention of the speakers.

"I'll go, Mary," said Mr. Edgar to his wife; "I wonder who can be coming here on such a bitter night?"

In a few moments Mr. Edgar re-entered the room. "For God's sake, Mary, get some warm clothing for that poor woman at the door; she is in a perishing condition, with an old faded thin calico dress, and a worn-out shawl about her shoulders. I asked her repeatedly to come in, but she refused. Oh, what a night to be abroad looking for food!"

Mary hastened away, and as quickly returned to the hall where the woman was standing. A heavy woollen shawl was wrapped round the shivering creature, and a thick dress, together with some other useful articles, were given to her.

"God in heaven bless you for this," said a sweet, gentle voice; "think it not strange that I refuse

to remain and partake of your hospitality, my child is hungry, and your husband has given me money, to buy it food."

"Tell me where you live, and to-morrow I will go and see you." The stranger hesitated, then bursting into tears she said, "Hard and pressing want has driven me to this, it is the first time that I have begged."

"Oh, that is nothing," said Mary, soothingly, "that is nothing; neither you nor your child must want while so many have plenty. Will you let me come and see you?"

"Yes, yes, come! the voice of kindness sounds strangely to me—yes, come to ———," and telling her where she lived, the woman hastened away. Mary returned to the cheerful fireside with her heart saddened by the distress she had seen, and as she looked at her own child lying in its warm cradle, she thought of the poor woman hurrying to a cheerless home, with the food of charity to feed her little one. "O God, make me truly thankful for thy blessings," was her inward ejaculation, "and give me more and more of that charity which freely feeds the hungry and clothes the naked."

"Poor thing," said Mr. Edgar, "how great must have been her destitution! I am afraid she has asked and been refused before she reached here, for when she spoke it was timidly, like one who dreaded being repulsed."

"I hope she did not go next door, for Mrs. Crimpton makes it a rule never to give, thinking it wrong to encourage street beggars."

"It would be wrong," remarked Mary's cousin, "to encourage the idle or the profligate, but you can generally tell persons of such character, and surely that is a narrow heart which will refuse all, for fear of sometimes giving to the unworthy."

"Yes, it is indeed a cold, narrow-hearted policy. I would rather give a dozen times to the undeserving than run the risk of refusing one who is in want."

"And so would I," said Mr. Edgar, between whom and his wife there was a remarkable uniformity of opinion. "I never like to see anybody turned away without relief. We cannot, it is true, give largely, or devise great schemes for the benefit of the destitute, but if each individual who has the ability were willing to do something for the poor who come to his door, or who live in his neighbourhood, the amount of suffering would be infinitely lessened. While we are selfishly debating about the worthiness or unworthiness of an object, a fellow-creature may be starving."

"How thin and feeble that poor woman looked who was here to-night! What a sin it would have been to have let her go empty-handed. To-morrow I must see what can be done for her."

"I wish I could go with you, Mary; sometimes

I dread your going alone into strange places inhabited only by want and misery."

"Oh, you know I've grown quite a heroine. I must acknowledge that at first my heart beat somewhat quickly, when venturing up an alley, or descending the decayed steps of some old cellar, or when clambering the dingy staircase to an out-of-the way, queer-looking room in a garret. But I have never met with any mishap; on the contrary, I have always been received with the greatest kindness.

The next day Mrs. Edgar put up some delicacies in a covered basket, and went in search of her visitor of the preceding night. The house was a long way off, and in a room scarcely containing an article of furniture, with a few small sticks burning on the hearth, sat a female picking the hair used for filling cushions and mattresses. In one corner stood a low bed on which a child lay sleeping. It was in truth the abode of poverty. A flush overspread the face of the female as she rose on the entrance of Mrs. Edgar, who in the broad day-light saw the ravages made by woe and want in a face of touching and child-like beauty. There was an embarrassing pause while Mary took a seat and placed her basket on the floor.

"How kind you are to come so far to see me. But for you, last night, my child might have perished. During the day I had not tasted food,

the little bread I had was not enough to satisfy the hunger of my child, and we were both sinking from exhaustion; another such day and night, and all would have been over."

"Oh, if we had only known that you were suffering here, we might have done something to assist you sooner; but your wants must be attended to immediately."

"I thank you, but to-day my task will be finished, and I shall be paid for it when it is done; yesterday I was too weak to work—and I was compelled to beg."

Mary learned from the destitute woman that she was a widow, that for a year after the death of her husband she had comfortably supported herself and her infant; but a long sickness drained her resources, and left her with hardly strength to procure the necessaries of life. Few were willing to give employment to one who bore such indisputable marks of poverty, and it was only through the kindness of a neighbour, nearly as destitute as herself, that she procured the work which kept her from starving.

"You must not remain here," said Mrs. Edgar, "this room is damp and unwholesome."

The poor creature looked at her as if to say, "Where else can I go?" Mrs. Edgar understood the look and replied to it. "To-night I will speak with my husband, and to-morrow I will see

you again. There is no doubt but better accommodation can be provided, and your health will be benefited by the change."

"God reward you for this unexpected kindness. Yesterday I almost despaired, and thought that my child and I would die here together—alone—perhaps in the dark night, without one friendly eye to watch, or one kind word to soothe. Oh, it was a fearful thought!"

"To-morrow," said Mrs. Edgar, turning away to hide her tears, "to-morrow I will be here."

CHAPTER VI.

"Now, cousin," said Mary laughing, as she prepared to pay the promised visit, "I leave the baby in your hands. Rocking the cradle will be rather an awkward employment for a bachelor, but as Rosy sleeps all the evening, you will only have to put your foot on the rocker occasionally—so—not too roughly, mind, but softly—that will do, and it will not interfere with your reading in the least."

Street after street was crossed by Mr. Edgar and his wife, until they reached a thickly-populated neighbourhood on the east side of the city.

"What a long walk you had yesterday, Mary; this is a part of the city I have seldom seen since, with my school-mates, I went skating on Stuesant's pond. What a great change a few years have made! Here, where there was not long since swamp and meadow, are streets stretching down to the river, and filled with people."

"Yes, there is indeed a change, and there must be a great deal of destitution somewhere in this

neighbourhood. When I passed yesterday, I met so many poor women carrying small bundles of wood, and saw so many little pinched faces of half-clad children, that my heart ached, and I longed for part of the wealth of some of our millionaires to distribute among them."

"Not growing covetous, Mary, wishing for your neighbour's goods, eh?"

"I do not wish for more than I have to apply to my own use, but I could lay out thousands for the benefit of the poor who are suffering from the inclemency of the season!"

"Have I not heard you say that you would like a larger house, some new articles of furniture, and other things which we have not at present?"

"Yes; I confess to having said so, but I do not crave those things, nor would I hesitate a moment between giving the money for them, or bestowing it upon the poor."

"Why, Mary, I doubt not there are many who would call us poor!"

"We poor! with everything necessary for comfort or convenience, with health, with happiness, with something to spare for the needy, how can we be poor?"

"You are a dear, good wife, Mary, and few women would be so easily satisfied as you are. Mrs. Somebody's shawl, or dress, or bonnet, would be a subject of envy to many, and the poor hus-

band would be teased for the finery when perhaps he could not afford it."

"Take care, Fred, don't praise me too highly; you know I am an admirer of pretty things, but very pretty things are generally very costly ones, and prudence whispers, 'This is too extravagant,' and then the words of a master-spirit come to my aid:

"'For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich;
And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,
So honour peereth in the meanest habit.'

Ah! here is the house for which we are looking; what a wretched place it is!"

On entering the room occupied by the thin, pale creature who had so excited their compassion, they found her seated near the fire, with her own child in her lap, and two other shy, half-starved-looking little ones beside her. She was dividing among them part of the contents of the well-filled basket Mrs. Edgar had left the day before, and, as if caught in a wrong act, she started up, and attempted an apology for giving to others what had been left for the supply of her own necessities. The children drew back abashed and left the room.

"You did quite right," said Mr. Edgar, kindly; "I am only sorry that you had not more to spare them."

"We have come," said Mary, "to make some

arrangements, if you will permit us; Mr. Edgar thinks it would be better for you to go home with us, at present."

"Oh, I cannot, I have nothing wherewith to repay your kindness; in a few days I shall be stronger, and then I can resume my labour."

"That will never do; this place is uncomfortable, and your employment is unhealthy; nay, wait until you have heard me. I want some one, when I go out, to whose care I could trust my child, and then sometimes I have a great deal of sewing to do, and I am sure you could help me."

"But my child, I cannot part from my child!"

"Nor shall you; she is two years older than my Rosy, and will make a nice playfellow for her; don't you think so, dear?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Edgar, to whom his wife had appealed; "and I think, too, that both mother and child had better go with us to-night. We can wait," said he, turning to the pale and silent woman, who looked like one awaking from a dream, "we can wait until you are ready."

"You will not want any of these things," said Mrs. Edgar, as she glanced around the room, "and they may as well remain where they are."

"My neighbour, Mrs. Lambert, will be glad to take them."

"Then, by all means let her have them, and

here is some money that she may buy wood; you told me she had been kind to you."

The furniture and money were given to Mrs. Lambert; and Mr. Edgar taking the child in his arms, and followed by his wife and their intended guest, retraced his steps homewards.

A warm and cheerful room was theirs, and very pleasant and comfortable it looked to the sad stranger, as Mrs. Edgar, with her own friendly hands, untied the hood, and made her sit down in a softly-cushioned chair near the fire.

"And so you did not wake Rosy; well, you are an excellent nurse," said Mrs. Edgar to her cousin, who, from motives of delicacy, had averted his face when the stranger entered; "see, here is another little one, and you may take charge of her, while I go and see about supper."

The cousin turned to look at the child, his eyes met those of its mother; a sharp, shrill cry of pain broke from her lips, and she fainted. He was at her side in an instant. "Oh, most Merciful One! —Lizzy! Lizzy! Lizzy!" Alas! it was indeed Lizzy, and it was now Morris Wilson first saw her face since the night she had refused his hand!

CHAPTER VII.

Soon after her husband's death, Elizabeth Vinton found that nothing in the house where she lived was hers. Creditor after creditor came and claimed their share, till all was gone. She was alone, without a single earthly friend to whom she could look for assistance or advice. Two or three times had her husband, while living, taken letters from her to send to her parents, but no answer came; they must have cast her off for ever. Should she go to them now? Would they receive her? Afraid and ashamed to make the trial, she sold whatever available articles belonged to her, and left Boston for York, wishing for nothing but to hide her sorrow until death came to her relief. But new duties called forth her energies, and when her little girl looked up and smiled, she shrank from the thought of death, and prayed for life that she might be a protector to her child.

Elizabeth's only resource was her needle; but her health, already shattered by the sorrows through which she had passed, soon gave way un-

der the close confinement to which she was subjected; and on her recovery from sickness she found herself sunk in the depths of poverty! Still she worked on, at whatever employment could be obtained, forgetting her own wants in her endeavour to supply those of her child. At last, when unable to complete her task, compelled by hunger, she wandered abroad in search of food, and after finding door after door shut against her by some pampered menial or heartless mistress, then, when ready to sink with exhaustion, she met with the kind, compassionate family of the Edgars.

"How providential it was that you came to our house," said Mrs. Edgar to Elizabeth, on the morning after the latter had met with Morris. "Only to think how long he has been in search of you, and this was to be his last effort. What a happy circumstance that you came here!"

"And Morris told you that my parents never received my letters?"

"He did; and that your father had been in Boston seeking for you. The first time, the old man was rudely repulsed from Mrs. Vinton's, and on his second visit that lady had gone to Europe, and no one could or would tell him anything about her son. Once again he tried to find you, and some person informed him that your husband was dead, and that you had left Boston and gone no one knew whither."

"My dear father! and while he was seeking his unworthy child, she was fleeing from him, a prey to dark and sinful thoughts!"

"This is the third time my cousin has been in York since your father despaired of ever seeing you again. Something led Morris to believe you were here, and I have known him to walk the streets for days together, looking at every female who at all resembled you. Poor fellow! how faithful-hearted he has been!"

A sudden expression of pain passing over the face of her guest, warned Mrs. Edgar to refrain from any further mention of the subject.

"I will see Mr. Wilson to-day; last night it was impossible for me to speak to him. Oh, I have so much to ask—my father, my mother, my sister—and he says they are all well?"

"Yes, dear, they are all well, and their only desire is to have you with them once more; they would then be happy!"

"Ah! I have not deserved so great a kindness. I deserted them when I knew their hearts were bound up in me. But I have suffered, how deeply none save Heaven can ever know!"

Painful to both was the meeting between Morris Wilson and Elizabeth Vinton. The past came up before each with startling vividness. The night they had last met under the old porch, her refusal, his grief, all came back; and the remembrance to

her was fraught with agony and shame—to him, with love, and sorrow, and regret.

"Can you be ready to go home next week, Mrs. Vinton? I will write to your parents and prepare them for your return."

"Go home! how strangely these words sound to one who has been so long without a home. Will they receive me, Mor——Mr. Wilson, are you sure they will?"

"Yes, yes, they will be but too glad to do so. You do not think they could forsake you, Lizzy!"

Morris spoke in his old warm manner, and Elizabeth tried to believe that it would be as he said, but her own unworthiness rose up before her, and the dark shadow dimmed her joy.

In a few days, Morris received an answer to the letter he had sent to Mr. Greene, and when Elizabeth read the old man's thanks to Heaven for the recovery of his child, and how impatiently they all wished for her return, she no longer hesitated, but, taking an affectionate leave of her lately-found friends, went with Morris Wilson to her childhood's home.

Clasped to the breast of parents and sister, feeling their warm tears upon her brow and cheek, seeing her child fondled and caressed, Elizabeth could no longer doubt; ah, they loved her still! Like the prodigal, she had returned to her father's house, and had been met with blessings instead of

reproaches — open arms to receive her — loving words to comfort her, the best of everything was hers. Again the dear name of Lizzy fell from familiar lips, and the formal Elizabeth, assumed at her ill-starred marriage, was forgotten, and with it was tacitly buried all allusion to the past.

Morris Wilson again became a visitor at farmer Greene's. He had always something to bring little Lizzy, and the child grew so fond of him, that she would watch for his coming, and run to meet him, that he might toss her in his arms, or dance her upon his knee. Her gleeful laugh, her shining curls, her winning, mirthful ways, all reminded him of long ago. She was Lizzy's child —and as Morris pressed her closely to his heart, he knew he doubly loved her, for her mother's sake!

"And so Hetty and James Jansen are to be married, your mother tells me, Lizzy?"

"Yes; Hetty would not give her consent until I was found! How grateful we all are to you, Morris."

How these simple words thrilled the heart of Morris Wilson and overpowered him with memories of bygone times! and how nervously and confusedly he whispered, "Grateful, Lizzy! can you never be more than grateful? Lizzy, dearest, speak to me—one word, Lizzy!"

They were sitting under the old porch, the

moonlight came shimmering through the woodbine, and revealed to Morris that Lizzy was in tears.

"Oh, this is too painful, Morris! I hoped you had overcome your feelings of affection for me! I am but a blighted flower, Morris! Rude were the storms through which I passed, and the seeds of decay are *here*—nay, look not doubtingly, none know the languor, the exhaustion, against which I daily strive. Speak not again on this subject, Morris; it but adds an additional pang to a heart already sorely wounded. Once I asked you to be my friend; you will not deny me now, Morris?"

"I can deny you nothing, Lizzy, only speak not so mournfully; time, quiet, will restore you—you are too young to give up all hope!"

"Ah, not too young. If time is counted by suffering, what an age I have lived during the last five years! My dear parents, on them the blow will fall most heavily! and my child—O God! my darling child!"

"Will you trust her with me, Lizzy? I already love her as if she were my own!"

A pressure of Lizzy's wasted hand was the only answer, and as Morris looked earnestly upon her, he wondered that he had not sooner read in the pale, sad face, and mournful eyes, that the heart of the only woman he ever loved, was broken!

The bustle of preparation for Hetty's wedding,

and the excitement attendant upon it, had died away. Quiet once more reigned at farmer Greene's. Ah! it was a fearful quiet!

In her own chamber, once so bright and sunny, lies Lizzy. The room is darkened, and over it hangs a stillness so deep that you can listen to the throbbing of the heart, and count its beating. The stifled sob, the agonizing groan of a man, breaks the unearthly gloom. It is Morris Wilson. He has stolen from the weeping friends below, and is kneeling beside Lizzy's coffin!

She withered like the flowers when the storm has crushed them; and the one error of her life, which brought with it sorrow, and shame, and suffering, was mournfully expiated!

THE SEAMSTRESS.

CHAPTER I.

"CLARA, I wish you would assist me with this sewing; Miss Grey was not well yesterday, and I fear will not be able to come here to-day."

"And do you wish me to take her place and turn seamstress? No, no, aunt Letty, I dislike sewing; plain sewing is horribly vulgar, and, besides, I've no time. After taking my Italian lesson I will finish one more row on my worsted netting, and then I must dress for a walk. I don't know why Mary Grey has those everlasting headaches; people who live by their needle should act differently; she knows ma' will be disappointed if she is not here, and I think she might have exerted herself a little to oblige ma'."

"You cannot be so unreasonable as to wish her to work when she is unable to do so?"

"Unable! I believe half the time she is only

putting on airs; and it is pa's fault, for he treats Mary as if she were an equal, instead of an old maid who is paid by the day for plain sewing!"

"Clara! Clara! I am grieved to hear you talk so unfeelingly. From your cradle you have been surrounded by luxury, every wish has been gratified, and just in proportion as you have been removed above the toiling thousands around you, in just such proportion you have become pampered and selfish."

"I wish no lectures, aunt Letty. Your sympathy for the single sisterhood is not to be wondered at; old maids—pshaw!"

The young lady took her lesson, finished her row of netting, dressed herself with extreme care, and then went out to walk.

Clara's mother was out of town, and the duty of superintending the household concerns devolved wholly on aunt Letty. Indeed, this was no rare occurrence, for her sister-in-law, when in town, was obliged to receive and return so many visits, that—"Letty, will you give orders to cook this morning?—Letty, will you help Miss Grey with this sewing?—Letty, will you stay in the nursery until the baby goes to sleep? the little thing does not like nurse, and I am engaged for the evening,"—requests that had first been made in a gentle, insinuating manner, as if a favour would be granted if aunt Letty complied with them, were

now equal to commands when uttered by Mrs. Alexander Boardman to her husband's sister.

While thoughts of her own happy girlhood were thronging round her heart, aunt Letty felt that she was indeed an old maid, as with tears blinding her eyes she sat down alone to "stitch, stitch, stitch," for her brother's wife.

From the death of her aged mother, Letitia Boardman had resided with her only brother, a wealthy merchant. Affectionately attached to his sister, Mr. Boardman always wished her to act as if his house were her own, and, daily engaged in business, he knew not but his dear Letty was happy as he desired she should be. Of the many services looked for as a matter of course by Mrs. Boardman, and exacted as a right from the "old maid" by Clara, he knew nothing, for his sister would not stoop to complain, nor did she wish to wound his feelings by showing him how matters really stood.

"Is not Miss Grey here to-day?" inquired Mr. Boardman of his sister, when they sat down to dinner; "I thought you told me she would remain for two weeks, Letty."

"She was not well yesterday, and was obliged to go home, and I fear is no better to-day, or she would have been here."

"Poor thing!" said Mr. Boardman, compassionately. "You must go and see her after dinner,

Clara; perhaps she wants something we can send her."

Clara looked up with a flushed face. "Go and see her; go and see Mary Grey, pa'?"

"Yes, that is what I said; you look surprised—what do you mean, Clara?"

"Nothing—but—I think Duncan might go instead of me."

"But I wish you to go, and not your maid."

"Well, pa', this is so strange! I don't know where Mary lives, and it is certainly more fitting that Duncan should visit our seamstress, than that I should go trudging into some out-of-the-way street to look after her."

Mr. Boardman gave one long, searching look at his daughter, and, without replying to her, he turned to his sister.

"Letty dear, you will see Miss Grey this afternoon; if she requires medical advice let Dr. Walker go to her immediately. When I return in the evening we will consult together how we may best benefit her without wounding her delicacy of feeling."

Pained by Clara's exhibition of unfeeling pride, Mr. Boardman found that he had committed a great error; he had left his daughter's education wholly to her mother, and to teachers of her mother's selection, without pausing to think whether that mother was fitted for the holy duty entrusted to her. He

resolved in future to watch more carefully the temper and the habits of his child, while he comforted himself with the thought that Clara was barely seventeen, and that it would be easy to uproot from her young heart the tares of pride and selfishness.

"Well, Letty, have you seen Miss Grey?"

"Yes, she was quite ill when I went there, and there was no one with her but her nephew. I sent him for the doctor, who administered some medicine, and when I came home I left Betty to stay with Miss Grey until to-morrow."

"You did quite right, quite right, dear sister; and now if you will step into the store-room you will find some fresh fruit I ordered while you were out: select the finest and send it to Miss Grey."

As her aunt left the room Clara curled her lip contemptuously, and wondered why her father took so much interest in the seamstress, the stiff old maid! Mr. Boardman saw the look, and with some severity he said: "Clara, I am surprised at the manner in which you conduct yourself when Miss Grey is spoken of, and I wonder that you have so little consideration for the feelings of others, I might say so little good breeding, as to speak of unmarried women by the sneering title of 'old maids,' in the presence of your aunt Letty."

"Oh, pa', I can't bear them. They are all so queer and fidgetty, and they dress so oddly; their

clothes are never in the present fashion, but look as if made ten years ago at least. What a fright Miss Grey is sometimes, with her old-fashioned white cambric gown, and her hair frizzed, and that everlasting gold locket, and her stately manner, as if she fancied herself some grand lady, instead of what she is, a mere sewing woman, hired at so much a-day."

"Your prejudices are unreasonable, Clara; there are quite as many married women who are 'queer and fidgetty,' as you term it, quite as many who 'dress oddly,' as there are of women who remain single. The mere fact of her being married is certainly no proof of a woman's superiority over those of her sex who do not enter into the married state, for it is as undeniable that many common-place, silly women have husbands, as that many richly-gifted, estimable women, have none. If we could look into the past history of those whom you call 'old maids,' what lessons of self-sacrifice might we not read there! The heart of one lies in the grave of the betrothed of her youth—that of another gave its all of love to one unworthy of the gift—another still has laid the fondest wishes of her life upon the altar of duty."

"Oh, pa', you find excuses for them because aunt Letty is one; but they are all disagreeable—I don't believe one of them ever had an offer."

Mr. Boardman was vexed at the flippant tone

of his daughter. He had been proud of her personal appearance, proud of her graceful manner, proud of her accomplishments, without knowing whether the cultivation of her mind kept pace with those outward adornments.

"Clara," said he, "I have a story to tell you, which may serve to make you less unjust in your opinions; come and sit beside me. You know the beautiful house that you have admired so often, and that I promised I would tell you all about some day or other."

"Yes, yes, I know—Mrs. Dashington lives in it now."

"That house was once owned by a gentleman possessing a large capital, and having business transactions with many of the most influential houses abroad. His numerous vessels traded to foreign parts, bringing him profitable returns on their various cargoes, and he was, in the fullest sense of the term, a prosperous man. His family consisted of a wife and two daughters. The sisters had in all respects equally shared the love of their parents. They were both beautiful, both highly accomplished, but their characters and dispositions were as opposite as their persons. The elder of the two was fair and delicate, rather *petite*, and of mild and gentle manners,

> "'A violet by a mossy stone,
> Half hidden from the eye.'

"The younger was of a proud and commanding figure. Her rich tresses were folded smoothly on her forehead, and gathered in a low knot on her beautifully-formed head, while her dark eyes flashed with the light of a haughty and unsubdued spirit. They were surrounded by all the elegancies of life, caressed by a large circle of gay friends, and sought in marriage by many who knew they were to inherit large fortunes.

"Among the occasional visitors at the hospitable house of the merchant was a young clergyman, who had charge of a country parish, with the *enviable* salary of one hundred pounds a-year. A man of polished manners and refined mind, he found much that was congenial in the society of the merchant's elder daughter, nor could he help observing that she regarded him with kindness. But he never dreamed that she could be his wife, and when he found that love had stolen into the place of friendship, he absented himself from the house, and strove, in the strict discharge of his duties, to conquer a passion that to him appeared hopeless.

"The last man to whom the merchant would have given his younger daughter was the very one she had chosen for a husband, and no entreaties of her parents could induce her to pause ere she gave her final decision. With the same obstinacy which had always appeared when her pleasure or her will were to be gratified, Adelaide assured her parents

that she would never marry any other than Vincent Barckley. Fearing that his daughter might be married clandestinely, the merchant unwillingly gave his consent to the union.

"So long as Mary hoped to influence her sister, and deter her from committing an act which she feared would bring sorrow and anguish to their happy home, so long did she plead and entreat Adelaide to wait one year before she wedded. But when Mary found her sister's resolution was not to be shaken, then, in her own loving, hopeful manner, did she strive to smooth all difficulties, and endeavour to persuade her parents and herself that Vincent Barckley might be a better man than the world thought he was. Mary could not deny that there was a charm and elegance in his manner well calculated to fascinate a gay and thoughtless girl; but to her it seemed false and hollow—there was no heart-warmth, none of that open manliness of character which wins upon a nature frank and confiding as its own. She had never liked him from the first. There was that involuntary repulsion for which she could not account, and which it was impossible to overcome. She strove to reason on the subject, but feeling was stronger than reason. She blamed herself for being prejudiced and uncharitable, and now that Barckley was the affianced of her sister, Mary tried more than ever to get rid of her distrust.

"The wedding was what is called a 'brilliant affair.' By the guests Mr. and Mrs. Barckley were declared to be formed for each other, and, judging from outward appearances, there seemed to be nothing wanting to complete their happiness. Soon after their marriage, Adelaide and her husband went abroad, and passed their first winter together in the giddy vortex of Parisian gaiety.

"The admiration excited by her grace and beauty, where there were so many graceful and beautiful women to contest the palm, gave a still greater impetus to her vanity, and the richest dresses and most costly ornaments were ordered without any regard to outlay, that she might retain the epithet of 'queenly,' bestowed upon her by her admirers.

"She enjoyed but little of her husband's society, as it would have been in shocking bad taste for a husband to be found, in a fashionable circle, paying any little civilities or attentions to his wife, and so she was frequently left to the charge of Monsieur De L'Orme. Mr. Barckley was, of course, at liberty to lavish his smiles and his politeness on any lady whom, for the moment, he thought the most agreeable, and in one successive round of amusements was spent the first winter in Paris.

"In the spring Adelaide wrote to her parents that her husband and herself had decided on staying abroad another year. They were to spend the summer months at Baden, and would return in

the winter to the French capital. The letter closed with a request for a large remittance, as Mr. Barckley had been disappointed in receiving the money he expected from his agent at home. The remittance was sent, and her father wrote kindly, yet firmly, of the necessity there was for prudence and economy. The only remark made by Adelaide, as she put down her father's letter, was, 'Economy! what a vulgar word, it is tantamount to parsimony!' Once more in the gay circle of her admirers, Adelaide strove to forget the many unpleasant scenes with her husband which had occurred during their late tour, when they had been obliged, in travelling, to spend not only hours but days together. Too proud to let the world suspect she was unhappy, no voice was more cheerful than hers, and no smile was brighter, as she returned the salutations that greeted her re-appearance. She had married Vincent Barckley wilfully, and what had been his great attraction? She blushed as her heart answered the question. The attraction had been, not his gifted intellect, not his moral worth, but his fine person, and his graceful manners.

"Alas, alas! how beauty of person becomes positive deformity when it is found to be but the covering for a corrupt mind! Admiration of the beautiful, love for it in every variety in which it is presented to us, seems to be an innate feeling of our nature. We gaze on a lovely picture, or a

noble statue, with emotions akin to reverence; and when we look admiringly on the living beauty of one made in the likeness of God, how are we shocked to discover that the beauty is that of Lucifer, fair as the morning without, and dark as the midnight within!

"Although Adelaide was too proud to betray her unhappiness to the world, the world is generally clear-sighted enough in discovering faults, follies, and misfortunes, and equally loud-mouthed in noising them abroad.

"Nor was there wanting matter for the tongue of scandal, when it was known that Mr. Barckley had eloped with the wife of a young officer who had been his most intimate friend, and who had frequently loaned him money to pay his debts of *honour* at Frescati's.

"Adelaide was humbled. She had been wounded, not in her affections, but in her pride. Her haughty spirit would have borne much could it have been concealed; but that her friends should see another preferred by her husband to herself, that they should know she had no power over his heart, this was indeed humiliating!

"And what would be said at home? How could she, who had left it an envied bride, return a deserted wife? And how could she remain abroad without the means of living as she had done hitherto? In the last letters from her sister, Mary had

plainly spoken of embarrassment in her father's affairs, and begged her to be more prudent.

"In this state of suffering, and while uncertain how to act, Adelaide was forced to listen to words of condolence from women who had envied her superior attractions, and who were secretly glad of her misfortunes.

"From De L'Orme she met with the kindest sympathy. His manner towards her was gentle and reserved, as if fearful of wounding her delicacy by obtruding himself upon her notice. Her every look was studied, her every wish anticipated; and feeling the need of some friend on whom she might rely, she was grateful to him for his kindness.

"In less than a month after being deserted by her husband, another letter from home told of the dangerous illness of her mother, and that her father was on the eve of bankruptcy. The shock was great.

"De L'Orme was with her when she received the letter, and her agitation on reading it was too great to be concealed. In a subdued and earnest tone he begged to know the cause of her distress. Was he not her friend? Was he not entitled to her confidence? Glad of sympathy, and regarding him as a man of true honour, she told him the state of her father's affairs, and her own perplexity. De L'Orme listened with deep and quiet attention, and when Adelaide paused, he sat silent for some minutes, without offering either condolence or ad-

vice. Then suddenly, as if waking from a reverie, he said in an agitated tone, while he took her hand and pressed it softly in his own, 'My dear Mrs. Barckley, will you confide in me?'

"'There is no one else in whom I can confide. Oh, De L'Orme, among all the hollow smiles that day after day are given me, all the hollow professions to which I listen from those who triumph in my misery, how thankful is my poor heart that in this strange land I have still one friend!'

"'Adelaide dearest,' said De L'Orme, passionately, 'you have spoken truly — you have one friend—a friend who loves you—who has long loved you—who will protect you while he has life—shall it not be so, my Adelaide?'

"Starting as if stung by a serpent, Adelaide sprang from her seat, and was about to leave the room without speaking. Misinterpreting her silence, De L'Orme followed and endeavoured to detain her.

"'Touch me not, De L'Orme,' said Adelaide, with quivering lip, while neck, cheek, brow, were crimsoned with shame and indignation—'touch me not. My confidence has been misplaced; but from *you*, De L'Orme, from *you*, should not have come this added humiliation.'

"'Listen to me, Adelaide. Your husband has left you alone and unprotected, he has broken the vows that made you his, and you are free. I will be to you——'

"The unhappy woman turned on him a look of proud and stern reproach, yet so mournful withal, that De L'Orme's eyes fell beneath her gaze, and he was too much confused to proceed.

"When he looked up she was gone. In her own chamber all Adelaide's assumed composure vanished. She threw herself upon a couch and gave way to an agony of tears. Her pride had hitherto supported her. Through all her misfortunes none had dared, by word or look, to treat her with undue familiarity, and now the only one in whom she had confided was the first to make her feel how utterly defenceless and humiliating was her present position. Anything else she might have borne rather than return alone to the home she had left so proudly, almost triumphantly. De L'Orme wrote repeatedly, but his letters were returned unopened, and with all speed Adelaide prepared to leave Paris. Her maid accompanied her to Havre, and was there dismissed; and, alone and unattended, Adelaide embarked on board the packet. The weather was stormy, the voyage long and wearisome, and her health began to give way. Oh, how the stricken one longed for home! When she had landed and procured a carriage, she gave the driver her father's address, and in a state of nervous anxiety threw herself back in the seat, and tried to think how it would look at home.

"The day was drawing to a close, and the streets

were thronged with multitudes all hurrying homeward. The labourer, with his weary frame and toil-stained garments, and the successful money-maker, with his self-satisfied bearing and fine apparel, were jostling each other in their eager haste. Their object was the same—to reach their home—how widely different!

"With a beating heart Adelaide ascended the steps of her father's house. It had a strange, deserted look. There were no lights in the drawing-room, and the servant who opened the door was not old Hector, who had been in the family since her childhood. She was passing through the hall without speaking, when the servant asked 'who she wished to see?'

"'Miss G——,' replied Adelaide, 'is she not at home?'

"'She does not live here, madam.'

"'Not live here! this is Mr. G——'s residence, is it not?'

"The servant hesitated a moment, and then answered, 'It was, madam, but Mr. G——moved away two weeks ago.'

"Adelaide was stunned, and leaned against the wall for support.

"'Can you tell me where he has removed to?'

"The man gave her the direction, and with sad forebodings Adelaide turned from the home of her happy years. She could scarcely believe that the

humble-looking tenement to which she had been directed could be the shelter of her parents and her sister. Parents! alas, she had but one. A week before her arrival her mother had died, even while praying that she might be spared to see her child. The shock of meeting her family under such altered circumstances preyed upon Adelaide's already enfeebled frame, and in four months after her return she was laid beside her mother, leaving an infant two weeks old to the care of her sister.

"From the moment that misfortune overtook the once prosperous merchant, Herman Hope, the young clergyman to whom I have alluded, was a constant visitor when in the city. It was he who stood by the bedside of Adelaide's mother, when death released her from her sorrows, and it was his voice which repeated at the grave the blessed words, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' It was he who poured the baptismal water on the brow of Adelaide's child, and, in her conflict with the King of Terrors, administered the consolations of religion to Adelaide herself. It was he who whispered comfort and resignation to the sadly-stricken survivors, showing them that the 'Lord loveth whom He chasteneth,' and that 'those outward afflictions which are but for a moment, work for us an exceeding weight of glory.'

"Herman Hope was the last of a family who had one by one passed away, with a beaming of the

eye and a burning of the cheek which was beautiful to the last. Often had Mary trembled as the azure veins in his forehead grew more transparent, and the bright flush came and went more rapidly; but Herman, buoyed by the hope of calling her his wife, gave no heed to the disease stealing stealthily upon him. The knowledge came too soon. The physician told them his only hope for Herman's recovery was in a winter's residence at Santa Cruz.

"Poor Mary! how many a wakeful, tearful night she spent in preparing the many little things a woman's love deems necessary for the comfort of an invalid. She could not go with him, and smooth his pillow, and day by day watch beside him, speaking tender words of love and hope. Her father and her sister's helpless infant claimed her care; and commending her betrothed to the protection of Him who watches over all creatures, she turned to her home duties with a feeling of loneliness greater than she had ever known before.

"Mary received a letter from her lover soon after his arrival. It was written in that glad and buoyant tone which always marks the renewed health of one who has been suffering from illness, and who feels the life-current once more flowing warmly through his veins.

"And now Mary's step grew lighter, and her

heart-pulse beat quicker, as she played with the child, or administered some gentle restorative to her parent. It was time that she should receive another letter, but when none came, she thought it was because Herman wished to surprise her with his presence, and daily did she picture their happiness when he should again be at her side. Nestle a little longer, thou bright-winged angel of hope, nestle a little longer in the maiden's heart! A little longer let her dream, for hers will be a fearful waking! The beloved—the betrothed—has passed away to the silent land, and she sat not by him when the dark angel veiled his eyes in shadow—she kissed not his last breath, when the bright angel bore his soul to bliss. A lock of hair! a ring! and these are all that is left! Precious mementos of the dead, to be laid aside sacredly, to be wept over in secret, to be kissed by the lips, to be pressed to the heart until the hand can no longer clasp its treasures! Of Mary's sorrows I may not speak. It would be profanation. A wife bereaved of her husband, has no need to hide her grief. But a maiden bereaved of her betrothed, must fold the agony in her own heart; maidenly delicacy prompts her to hide all sign of sorrow, and only in solitude can her pent-up feelings have vent in tears.

"Notwithstanding Mary's strict economy, the little that had been spared her father by his creditors was nearly spent, and the time she could steal

from attendance on him and the child was given to her needle.

"Many a beautifully embroidered fabric was admired by her former associates, without their being aware that to the merchant's daughter was due the praise so freely given.

"A few years more, and Mary was left alone with the child. She still toiled on, though, owing to the failure of her eyesight, she had ceased to embroider, and was obliged to resort to plain sewing to earn a subsistence. Some of her former friends wished to aid her, but she gently refused their kindness, and for fourteen years she has maintained herself and the orphan boy."

Mr. Boardman paused, and Clara eagerly asked, "Where is she now, papa? What is her name? How I should like to see such a woman! And she never got married? What a pity!" (Clara seemed to think that woman's only mission was the mission matrimonial.) "Well, I should like to see her, though. Do you know where she lives, papa?"

"Yes, and if you had gone where I requested you to yesterday, you would have known too."

"Why, pa', it can't be—no, no, it can't be Miss Grey?"

"Yes, Clara, it is Miss Grey of whom I have been speaking, one of the most amiable, suffering, self-sacrificing women I have ever known. Miss

Grey, cradled like yourself in luxury, and now your mother's 'sewing woman, hired at so much a-day!'"

Clara blushed with shame, and her father proceeded.

"It is a long story I have told you, my daughter, but my feelings were too much interested to allow of my shortening its details. There is a brief tale connected with it which I will also relate to you.

"You remember that I said Mr. Grey had many vessels trading to foreign ports. The mate of one of these vessels was often at the office of the merchant, and sometimes at his house, on business, where he was always received with kindness. Frequently at dusk he met a very pretty girl leaving the house, who, he ascertained, did the plain sewing of the family. One evening they chanced to leave the house at the same time, and the mate walked by the young girl's side, and by degrees entered into a conversation with her, which was only interrupted by her stopping before her own door, and thanking him for his civility. He still lingered without bidding her good night, and with some little hesitation she invited him to enter.

"He did so gladly. After one or two more voyages she became his wife. His captain died, and through the kindness of the owner he was promoted to the command of a fine ship. In time he became owner himself of part of her cargo. For-

tune smiled upon him, all his investments were profitable, and in a few years he no longer went to sea, but took his place among the wealthiest merchants of the city.

"His wife was a handsome, fashionable woman, and his eldest daughter was in many respects like her mother. The father was fond of his daughter, too fond to see her faults. He did not know how deeply the hateful weed of pride had taken root in her heart, until he heard her speak contemptuously of the class to which her mother had belonged, until he heard her refuse to visit one to whose father her own owed all his prosperity."

"Oh, pa'!" exclaimed Clara, her face crimsoned with mortification, "oh, pa'! it can't be!"

"Yes, Clara, it was from the door of Miss Grey's once elegant home that your father first walked with the SEAMSTRESS."

THE UNFINISHED PICTURE.

CHAPTER I.

" O God! to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely!
To see a light on dearest brows,
Which is the daylight only!"

I WAS sitting one morning in the library of a friend, looking over a valuable collection of works of art, made during a five years' residence abroad, and listening to his animated description of scenes and places now become familiar to every one who reads at all, through the medium of "Jottings," "Impressions," and "Travels," with which the press abounds.

Among the paintings were small copies in oil from Correggio, Guercino, Guido, and Raffaelle. There was a head of the latter, copied from a portrait painted by himself, and preserved in the Pitti Palace. With the slightest shade of hectic

on the cheek, and the large, unfathomable eyes looking into the great Beyond, it was truly angelic in its loveliness. No wonder the man for whom nature had done so much, and who delighted in portraying the loftiest ideal beauty, no wonder he was called "divine"!

On one side of the room in which we were conversing stood a picture apart from all the others, which soon engrossed my entire attention. A young man was represented reclining on a couch, and wrapped in a robe falling in loose folds about his person. His countenance bore the traces of suffering, but his dark eyes were filled with the light of love and hope, as they looked up into the face of a young female bending mournfully at his side. On the head of this female the artist had lavished all the love of genius. With the sunny hair parted on the fair forehead, and the rich braids simply confined by a silver arrow—the dark eyes from which the tears seemed about to fall—the half-parted lips quivering as if from intense emotion—oh, it was transcendently lovely! The rest of the figure was in outline, but as vividly portrayed as some of those wonderful illustrations by Flaxman, in which a single line reveals a story.

"How is this?" said I, after gazing long and earnestly upon it; "how is this?—why is the picture unfinished? And who was the painter?"

"The tale," replied my friend, "is a sad one;

and if you are tired of looking at pictures and medals, I will relate it to you."

"Not tired, yet I should like to hear the story to which this picture imparts an unusual interest."

"You remember Paul Talbot, who left here some years ago to pursue the study of his art abroad."

"I do, but that young man—sick—almost dying—I thought the face a familiar one; but can that be Paul?"

"Alas! yes—he is dead!" and my friend dashed away a tear as he spoke.

"Dead!" repeated I. "Paul Talbot dead! When did he die?"

"Not long before my return. Poor fellow! he endured much, and his career was an exemplification of what a man of untiring energy can accomplish under the most adverse circumstances.

"Soon after the birth of Paul, his father died, leaving little save a mother's love and a stainless reputation to his infant son.

"Mr. Talbot was a man of refined taste, and had collected round him objects of which an amateur might be justly proud—and thus from childhood had been fostered Paul's love for the beautiful.

"Well educated and accomplished, Mrs. Talbot undertook the tuition of her child, and by giving lessons in drawing, painting miniatures on ivory, and small portraits in oil, kept herself and her boy

above the pressure of want. Carefully she instilled into his tender mind those lofty principles of rectitude, of uncompromising integrity, and that child-like trust in the goodness of an overruling Providence, which sustained him through all the trials of after years.

"How holy, how powerful, is the influence of a mother! The father may do much, but the mother can do more, towards the formation of the mind, and the habits of early childhood. Exercising a power, silent, yet refreshing as the dews of heaven, her least word, her lightest look, sinks deep into the hearts of her children, and moulds them to her will. How many men have owed all that has made them great to the early teachings of a mother's love! The father, necessarily occupied with business or professional duties, cannot give the needful attention to the minor shades in the character and disposition of his little ones, but the mother can encourage and draw out the latent energies of the timid, can check the bold, and exert an influence which may be felt not only through time, but through eternity.

"It was beautiful to see Paul Talbot standing by his mother's side, with his childish gaze fixed upon her face, while receiving instruction from her lips, and to hear him, as he grew in years, wishing he was a man, that he might be enabled to supply her every want.

"'You know,' he would exclaim, while his fine eyes were flashing with enthusiasm, 'that I will be an artist; and, oh, mother, if I could, like Washington Allston, be a painter-poet; could I but paint such a head as that we saw in the Academy, and write such a book as Monaldi, then, mother, I would gain fame; orders would crowd upon me —and then—then we would go to Italy!'

"Go to Italy! of this he thought by day, and dreamed by night; and to accomplish this was the crowning ambition of the boy's life.

"He was willing to toil, to endure privation and fatigue, could he but visit that land where heavenly beauty is depicted on the canvas, where the marble wants but the clasp of him of old to warm it into life, and where the soft blue of the sky, and the delicious atmosphere brooding over the glories of centuries gone by, make it the Mecca of the artist's heart.

"But amid all these dreams of the future, all these ambitious aspirings of the gifted youth, death cast his dark shadow over that peaceful dwelling, and the mother, the guardian angel of the fatherless boy, was borne away to be a dweller in the silent land.

"With what passionate earnestness did he call upon her name! How did he long to lie down by her side! His mother! his mother! she had taught his lisping accents their first prayer; she had

watched over his little bed, and moistened his parched lips, when he was ill with fever—so ill, that his mother's watchful tenderness was all, under God, that saved him from the grave. As he grew older, she had spoken to him, not like the boy he was in years, but like the man to whom she could impart her thoughts, and with whose mind of almost premature development she might hold converse, and feel herself understood. And now, in his fifteenth year, when he was thinking of all that he could, nay, of all that he *would* do for her, his mother had died! Who can wonder that the boy pined, and sat upon her grave, and longed for her companionship, and wept as if his heart must break?

CHAPTER II.

"Then all the charm
Is broken—all that phantom-world so fair
Vanished, and a thousand circlets spread,
And each misshapes the other."—COLERIDGE.

"ABSTRACTED in his habits, quiet and sensitive, from his reveries in dream-land, the orphan woke to find himself the inmate of a new home.

"Mrs. Winter, the only sister of the late Mr. Talbot, was wholly unlike her brother. With little taste for the elegancies of life, except so far as she thought their possession would give her importance in the eyes of others, with no sympathy for any ambition save that of acquiring money, she looked with no very favourable eye on her brother's orphan. Dazzled by the prospect of a carriage, a town and country-house in the perspective, she had married a man of sixty, when she was barely sixteen, and could never forgive her brother for not falling in with her scheme of catching the rich heiress, who, she avowed, waited but the asking to change the name of Miss Patty Pringle, for the

more lofty-sounding title of Mrs. Percy Talbot. But Percy Talbot preferred the portionless Isabel Morton, and the monotony of a counting-room, to the bank-stock, real estate, and soulless face of Miss Patty Pringle. Hence there was but little intercourse between the brother and sister, and when the younger Talbot sought the shelter of his aunt's roof she animadverted with great bitterness on the folly of people gratifying a taste for luxuries beyond their means, and encouraging boys without a shilling to spend their time in reading books and daubing canvas.

"Nor could Mrs. Winter refrain from talking of stupidity, when Paul sat quietly at his drawing, while her own sons were making the house ring with their boisterous mirth. The boys, catching the spirit of their mother, ridiculed Paul's sketches, and, with the petty tyranny of little minds, subjected him to every annoyance, and taunted him with his dependent state. The proud, sensitive boy writhed under such treatment, and determined on leaving the relatives who had neither tastes nor sympathies in common with his own.

"When at the age of twelve years he hung over the landscape he was trying to imitate, and from which no boyish sports could lure him; when he saw the sketch grow beneath his touch, and look more and more like the original, until, in the exultation of his young heart, he exclaimed, 'I knew

that I could do it, if I did but try,' he unconsciously displayed that perseverance of character without which no one can hope to attain eminence. And now that same energy was employed in seeking means to gain a livelihood without being subjected to the bitterness of insult.

"He succeeded in obtaining a situation, and in compensation for his services received his board and a small salary. True, he had but little, but that little was his own; he had earned it, and a proud feeling of independence was his, when purchasing the scanty stock of drawing materials with money obtained by his own exertions. And so passed a few years, during which he diligently devoted himself to the business of his employer through the day, and to reading and drawing at night.

"The long-cherished hope of visiting Italy had never been abandoned, although the many obstacles in the way seemed insurmountable. But now a bright thought occurred to him. 'I will give up my situation; I will hire a room with the money already saved, and devote myself entirely to the pursuit of art. I will paint a picture—it will be placed in the exhibition—and then—' Talbot paused, and his cheek glowed, and his heart-pulse quickened as he looked into the future.

"The resolution once taken, he was not long in carrying it into effect; and day after day saw him

at his easel, labouring with patient assiduity, and flattering himself that his picture would not pass unnoticed.

"When the day of exhibition arrived, Talbot walked nervously up and down the gallery where the pictures were hanging, every now and then glancing at his own, with the small ticket appended announcing it for sale, and pausing to observe if it attracted attention. But it had been placed in a bad light, directly beneath two brightly-tinted landscapes, and so low down that you were obliged to put one knee on the floor before it could be examined. Poor Paul! no one gave more than a passing glance to what had cost you weeks of patient labour, and the papers passed it by with merely announcing its name and number on the catalogue.

"What a rude dashing down of all his hopes was here! What a fading of the air-built castles he had taken such a delight in building! The land of promise had receded from his view, and the shores of Italy were as a far-off vision seen in the dimness of deepening twilight. Oh, what a sinking of the heart follows such disappointments! A goal is to be won—the aspirant rushes eagerly to the race—hope lures him on—he grows weary, oh, how weary. Courage—the thrilling sound of fame's trumpet-peal is ringing on those heights afar—courage—one more struggle and the prize will be

his own! One more struggle—and hope fades from his sight—and the last faint echo of fame's music dies upon his ear—and a dull lethargy seizes on his mind—and the pulses of his heart grow still and cold as the waveless, tideless surface of a deep, dark lake! Happy he who can shake off the despondency attendant on times like these, and, like the bird momentarily driven back by the storm, can plume his wings and dare a nobler flight.

CHAPTER III.

"Look not mournfully into the Past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the Present. It is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy Future, without fear, and with a manly heart."—LONGFELLOW.

"THE spirits of youth are elastic, and after great pressure will naturally rebound. 'Hope on, hope ever,' is a maxim seldom forgotten until age has chilled the blood and palsied the powers of life. After a few days spent in brooding over the present, Paul again looked forward to the future, and determined to seek some other avenue by which he might gather up a little, just a little, of the treasure which others possessed in such abundance. His fondness for literature suggested the idea that his pen might be employed with more profit than his pencil, and the periodicals of the day appeared to offer a wide field for exertion. But emolument from such sources was precarious at best. All who held an established reputation in the world of letters were contributors to the various popular publications, and Paul Talbot wanted the 'magic of a *name*' to win *golden* opinions from the press.

Sometimes he met with those who were more just and generous than others, and, thus encouraged, he toiled on, hoping, even against hope, that his desires would yet be accomplished.

"With many misgivings, and a fear that he had mistaken his vocation, he had taken his ill-fated picture to a place where engravings were kept for sale, and left it with the shopkeeper, promising to pay him one half the money for which it might be sold. How discouraging to see it week after week in the window, until it began to look like a soiled fixture of the establishment! No one would ever buy it, that was certain, and if they would not purchase this, his best work, how could he ever hope to dispose of others of less merit, which were standing round the walls of his little room? Alas, no! but when once in Italy—then he would paint pictures such as he dreamed of in imagination. For the present, with weary frame and throbbing brow, he must labour on.

"There are few but know

> "'How cruelly it tries a broken heart
> To see a mirth in anything it loves.'

And who that has ever walked forth on a particularly bright morning, when he was nursing a deep sorrow, or was weighed down by the pressure of misfortune, but felt annoyed by the light, and noise, and cheerfulness around him? Those vast

tides of human life what are they to him? He is but a drop in a wave of the mighty ocean—but a pebble thrown upon the sand—a broken link in the great chain of the universe. Thus felt Paul, as, on one of the loveliest days of laughing June, he wended his way to the office where he had left a manuscript to be examined by the publisher.

"'How can those people look so smilingly?' thought he, while glancing at the well-dressed groups on the side walk. 'And those children, how noisy they are—and see that carriage with its liveried attendants—pshaw!' Now Paul was not envious, and he was particularly fond of children, but the feeling of loneliness in the crowd was oppressive, and with another half audible 'pshaw!' he turned into a quieter street.

"The smiling face of the great man who employed so many subordinates in his large establishment, somewhat reassured the desponding youth, and after a little preliminary talk about encouraging native talent, a sum was offered, which, though small in itself, was just then a god-send to the needy Paul, who with many thanks bowed himself out of the publisher's presence. One ray of light had dawned on his darkened path, one beam of hope had shed its warmth upon his heart, and how differently now looked the scene through which he had lately passed! With buoyant step he went on. He, too, could smile,—the darling little ones,

how delighted he was to see them looking so happy —and the poor blind man at the corner must not be forgotten! Like the child who plays with the kaleidoscope, and every moment sees some new beauty, so Paul toyed with the many-coloured hues in the rainbow of hope, grouping them together in the most beautiful and dazzling forms.

"It was destined to be a red-letter day in his book of life. As he passed the print-shop he saw that his picture was gone from the window. It had been sold, and a companion-piece ordered by the purchaser. 'Oh that my mother were living!' sighed Paul—'oh that my mother were living, we might yet go to Italy!'

"Again the painter laid aside his pen and resumed his palette. The one order was executed, the money transferred to his slender purse, and even now he began to think how much might be put aside for his darling project.

"'Could I but obtain enough to pay for my passage—once there, in that delicious climate, I could live on so little! Oh, that some one would buy this!' he continued, taking up a small picture on which he had bestowed unusual care, 'it is worth more than either of the others. I shall leave it with the kind Mr. Barry; how generous he was in refusing the commission I promised him for the last one he sold.'

"Mr. Barry, at whose print-shop Paul had left

his first picture, had kindly drawn from him the story of his life, and felt deeply interested in the young artist's changing fortunes, but, like many other generous-hearted men, he was always forming schemes for the benefit of others, which his means would not permit him to accomplish.

"The kind man had just reared a goodly superstructure of greatness, upon a rather sandy foundation, for his young *protégé*, when Paul entered with the new work fresh from his easel.

"'Why, Talbot,' said he, cordially grasping the painter's hand, 'this is capital! and I consider myself a tolerably good judge. When younger, I was in the employ of a picture-dealer, who pursued the profitable business of making old pictures look like new, and the still more profitable one of making new pictures look like old. You stare, it is a fact, I assure you. To a Madonna, that had been bought for a trifling sum, I had the honour of imparting a time-worn tinge, which so took the fancy of an amateur, that he paid one hundred pounds for it at auction. But I never could endure cheating, so I left the picture manufactory, and commenced the sale of prints on my own account.'

"'Do you think there is any chance of selling this landscape?' inquired Paul. 'I will take three pounds for it.'

"'Why, Talbot, you are foolish, it is worth at least ten.'

"'Ah, no one would give me so large a sum for a picture; ten pounds! that would almost take me to Italy.'

"'Well, well, my dear fellow, it is said Providence helps those who help themselves, and you are sure to be helped in some way or other. I was thinking about you this morning, and wrote a note of introduction to Mr. C., who is a great patron of the Fine Arts. I have told him of your desire to go abroad, and how you are situated——'

"'Nay, nay, my kind friend,' interrupted Paul, 'this looks too much like begging a favour; remember I cannot sacrifice my independence, even to secure the accomplishment of my most ardent wishes.'

"'You are wrong, Talbot, you do not solicit him for aid; he has a taste for art, and if he gives you money, you return an equivalent in your picture, so that the obligation is mutual.'

"Paul was persuaded, and, bearing his friend's letter, bent his way to a fine-looking house, a long way from his own abode. Upon ringing the bell, he was informed by the servant that the family were at dinner. Leaving the letter with the waiter, he desired him to hand it to Mr. C., and say that Mr. Talbot would call to-morrow evening. The next evening Mr. C. was engaged, and on the next, when Paul was ushered into the drawing-room, and his name announced, he received a stately and

patronizing bow from a short, stout gentleman, who stood with his back to the fire, conversing with three or four more who were seated near him.

"'Take a seat, sir,' and the short man waved his hand towards the intruder, and resumed the conversation thus momentarily interrupted.

"Paul grew nervous, and taking advantage of a pause he rose, and, bowing slightly, advanced towards Mr. C. for the purpose of speaking. The latter began first—'I have looked over Mr. Barry's letter, young man, and hardly think it will be in my power to assist you.'

"'I came not seeking assistance, sir,' replied Paul; 'my friend Mr. Barry thought you might perhaps wish to add another picture to your collection, and, as I purpose going abroad, assured me you would cheerfully give a few lines of introduction to your young countrymen.'

"'Well, well, we will see, we will see, but all you young men have taken it into your heads that you must travel, and this makes so many applicants.'

"'Applicants!' the word stung Paul to the quick, and again bowing to Mr. C., he left the apartment. Once in the free air of heaven, he gave vent to his suppressed feelings, and vowed that should be his first and last visit to a patron.

"Barry was indignant when he heard the non-success of his young friend. 'Why, Talbot, that

man's name is bruited abroad as a most liberal patron of art, a fosterer of early genius, an encourager of native talent—how I have been deceived!'

"'Never mind, my dear friend, you will sell the picture to some one else, and I will conquer yet.'

"And Paul Talbot did conquer. When another year had gone by, he stood with the hand of his friend Barry clasped in his own, returning the warm 'God bless you,' fervently uttered by the old man in that hour of parting.

"In a wild tumult of feeling, half joy, half sorrow, he stood upon the deck of the vessel, and watched the shores of his native land as they faded in the distance.

> "'The sails were filled, and fair the light winds blew,
> As glad to waft him from his native home.'

"And now he is on the ocean—the waves are dashing against the ship and bearing him onward—whither? To the land of his hopes. To the land of his dreams. Why each moment does he grow sadder and sadder? Why, as the crescent moon rises serenely in the heavens, does he press his eyelids down to shut her beauty from his sight?

"'Oh that my mother were here! Great God! yon moon is shining on my mother's grave!'

CHAPTER IV.

"Wilt thou take measure of such minds as these,
Or sound, with plummet line, the artist heart?"
MRS. NORTON.

"Its holy flame for ever burneth,
From heaven it came, to heaven returneth;
Too oft at times a troubled guest,
At times deceived, at times oppress'd;
It here is tried and purified,
Then hath in heaven its perfect rest!
It soweth here with toil and care,
But the harvest time of love is there."
SOUTHEY.

"PAUL TALBOT is in the city of wonders. Ivy-girdled ruins of the time-embalming past are lying in the distance. Lofty basilicas—their altars rich in votive offerings, of surpassing magnificence, surround him on every side. Stately palaces—their long galleries filled with the noblest works of the mighty minds of old—are baring their treasures to his gaze. The 'dew-dropping coolness of each marble fountain gives new vigour to his

frame. He is excited, bewildered, dazzled, and drunk with beauty; and for weeks Paul wanders about Rome and its environs, forgetful that his lot is still to struggle and to toil. When roused to action, he threw himself heart and soul into his art; and the consequence was a long and severe illness, brought on by that absorbing devotion which often kept him at his pursuits until the morning dawn peering into his room reminded him that he was weary and overtasked. For months he lay wasted by sickness, helpless at times as a feeble child; but nature triumphed over disease, and he wandered once more beneath the blue sky, and felt the kiss of the balmy air upon his pallid cheek.

"From his walks upon the Pincian Hill, Paul could look upon the vast pile of the Vatican, with its Sistine Chapel, rendered immortal by the genius of Michael Angelo. Through maze of temple, church, and palace, were caught glimpses of the yellow Tiber, whose waves, reflecting back the rose-hues of the setting sun, filled the artist's mind with dreams of gorgeous Venetian colouring, as he slowly descended towards the Porto del Popolo, and his favourite retreat in the gardens of the Borghese. Here, under the porch of Rafaelle's Casino, would he linger, and conjure up visions of the past. Around him thronged the spirits of the mighty dead. Painter, sculptor, poet,—crowned princes

in the world of art! true prophets of the beautiful and good! They spoke to him of all that genius had achieved, of all that genius yet might do—soul answered soul, and inspiration made the weak one strong. 'I, too, will leave an imprint on the shore of time.' Thus resolving, with a return to health Paul returned with renewed ardour to his task, until the picture on which he had long and earnestly laboured was at length completed. He had chosen for his subject a scene representing the hermit Peter exhorting the people to join the Crusades. In their midst, with one arm outstretched, and the other raised to heaven, stood the enthusiast. On either side were grouped mailed knights, and stalwart forms, the tillers of the soil. One gentle lady, like the weeping Andromeda, was clinging to her lord, and a villager's wife held up her child for his father's last fond kiss. So admirable was the grouping, so animated and life-like the figure of the preacher, so eager and intense the emotion betrayed by the assembled multitude, that you listened to hear the eloquence that roused all Europe, and sent prince, peer, and peasant to rescue the holy sepulchre from the hand of the Infidel,—to cast down the crescent of Mohammed, and to raise the cross of Christ!

"And now came that fame for which the young painter had toiled, and to which he had looked forward as his highest guerdon. Crowds were

daily drawn to his *atélier*, and artists who had themselves won a world-wide renown, bestowed their warmest praises upon the 'Hermit' of Paul Talbot.

"The following winter Paul passed in Florence, and day after day he might be seen wending his way across the Piazza Vecchia to the halls of the Uffizzi, where the Tribune, with its gems from the hands of Rafaelle, Michael Angelo, and Titian, almost won him from the more distant gallery of the Pitti Palace. It was here that Paul formed an acquaintance with a Florentine merchant, who had spent the best years of his life in endeavouring to acquire a fortune equal to that of his ancestors, whose portraits now formed part of the collection belonging to the Grand Duke. To obtain repossession of these portraits, which necessity had compelled his family to part with, was now the Florentine's ambition; but they were gems of art, and could not be purchased. Failing in this, the merchant was anxious to possess copies, and having frequently observed Paul deeply engaged in contemplating the beauties of those treasured relics of the past, he engaged the young artist to paint for him the copies he desired. This commission led him often to Paul's studio, and his cultivated taste made him an appreciative possessor of the 'Hermit,' at a price which relieved the artist from fear of pecuniary embarrassment. Paul was requested

to visit the house of the merchant, and select the most fitting place to display the work of which the fortunate possessor was so justly proud. He went, and in the picture gallery of the wealthy Florentine was opened a new page in the artist's book of life.

"Poets and painters have ever an eye for beauty in woman, and when Carlotta Doni entered the apartment, leaning on the arm of her father, Paul started as if one of the bright visions of his ideal world stood suddenly embodied before him. The lady, too, was for a moment half embarrassed, for the fame of the young painter had reached her ears, and, woman-like, she had been wondering if report spoke truly when it ascribed to him the dark, clustering locks, and the lustrous eyes of her own sunny south.

"'Love's not a flower that grows on the dull earth;
Springs by the calender; must wait for sun—
For rain; matures by parts—must take its time
To stem, to leaf, to bud, to blow. It owns
A richer soil, and boasts a quicker seed!
You look for it, and see it not; and lo!
E'en while you look the peerless flower is up,
Consummate in the birth!'

"Was it strange that Paul and Carlotta, both worshippers of the beautiful, with souls alive to the most holy sympathies of our nature, was it strange that they should love?

"Paul had hitherto lived for his art alone. Painting was the mistress he had ever wooed with intense devotion, but now another claimed his homage, and he bowed with a fervour little less than idolatrous at woman's shrine. Such a love could not long remain concealed. The father of Carlotta, though a patron of art, was yet a vain and purse-proud man. Hoping by his wealth to obtain a husband for his daughter among some of the haughty but decayed nobility, he frowned on the artist, and forbade him his house. In secret the lovers plighted their troth, not knowing when they should meet again, and Paul left Florence with the resolve to win not fame alone, but wealth.

"At Rome he was enrolled a member of the Academy of St. Luke, for which honour he had been presented by Overbeck, the spiritually-minded Overbeck, who, himself the son of a poet, has enriched his art with the divinely poetical conceptions of his own pencil. At Munich, one of his pictures was shown by Cornelius to the King of Bavaria, and purchased by that magnificent patron of art at a price far exceeding the painter's expectations. At Vienna, a similar success attended him, and he returned to Florence after an absence of six years, with fame and wealth enough for the foundation of a fortune.

"From Carlotta he rarely heard, but he knew her heart was his, and he had that faith in her

character as a true woman, which made him believe that no entreaties or commands of her father would induce her to wed another. And Paul was right. Carlotta Doni still remained unmarried. In her the budding loveliness of the girl had expanded into the fuller beauty of the woman; but Talbot was sadly altered. The feverish excitement—the continued toil—the broken rest—the anxiety of thought to which he had been subjected, undermined his health, and planted the seeds of that insidious disease, which, while it wastes the bodily strength, leaves the mind unimpaired, and the hope of the sufferer buoyant to the last. The father of Carlotta, finding that neither persuasion nor coercion could make his high-souled daughter barter her love for a title, consented at last that she should become the bride of the artist; but many said the wily Florentine had given his consent the more readily, because he saw that Paul would not long be a barrier in the way of his ambition.

"Paul Talbot had buffeted the adverse waves of fortune; he had gained renown in a land filled with the most exquisite creations of the gifted; he had won a promised bride. Whence, in that bright hour, loomed the one dark cloud that blotted the stars from the sky? Could it be the shadow of the tomb? Was death interweaving his gloomy cypress with the laurel on the painter's brow? Oh,

no, no!—he was but weary—he only wanted rest, and his powers would again be in full vigour. Then, with Carlotta at his side—with her smile to cheer him on—he would aim higher and yet higher in his art.

"And the young wife was deceived. Although a nameless dread, a dark prescience, lay heavy at her heart, she yet thought the bright flush on the cheek of Paul a sign of returning health. How tenderly and anxiously she watched lest he should fatigue himself at his easel, and how gently she chid, and lured him from his task into the open air of their beautiful garden.

"One of the days thus passed had been deliciously mild, and, although mid-winter, in that heavenly climate where flowers are ever blooming in the open air, each breeze was laden with the heavy odour of the orange blossom, and the fainter perfume of the Provence rose. Stepping lightly from the balcony, where with Paul she had been seated watching the piled-up masses of crimson, of purple, and of gold that hung like regal drapery round the couch of the westering sun, Carlotta pushed aside the opening blossoms of the night jasmine which intercepted her reach, and gathering a handful of rose-buds, carried them to Paul. He took the flowers from his wife, and, looking mournfully upon them, said, 'When we cross the waters to visit my native land, we will take with

us some of your precious roses, beloved, and beautify my mother's silent home; and now,' he continued, twining his arm round her waist, and leading her to the harp, 'sing me that little song I wrote while yet a student in old Rome.' Pressing her lips upon his brow, Carlotta seated herself, and sang the song, which she had set to music. The air was soft and melancholy, and the sweet tones of the singer were tremulous with emotion.

"'Fill high the festive bowl to-night,
In memory of former years,
And let the wine-cup foam as bright
As ere our eyes were dimmed with tears.

"'Pledge, pledge me those whose joyous smile
Around our happy circle shone,
Whose genial mirth would hours beguile,
Which, but for them, were sad and lone.

"'Those hours, those friends, those social ties,
They linger round me yet,
Like twilight clouds of golden dyes,
When summer suns have set.

"'Then fill the bowl—but while you drink,
In silence pledge all once so dear,
Nor let the gay ones round us think
We sigh for those who are not here.'

"'My dear Paul,' said his wife, smiling through the tears with which, in spite of her efforts to repress them, her eyes were suffused, 'this sad song

should be sung on the last night of the year, the night for which it was composed. It should be sung while the student band of artists stood around each holding the flower-wreathed goblet from which he might quaff in silence, while his heart-memories were wandering back to fatherland. Let me sing,' —she paused on seeing the deep melancholy depicted on her husband's countenance—'nay, forgive me for jesting, love, I know with whom are your thoughts to-night, and will not ask you to listen to a lighter strain.'

"A month went by winged with love and hope. Paul found himself growing weaker, but he looked forward to a sea-voyage as a sure means of restoring him to health. Carlotta was hastening her preparatory arrangements, willing to leave her home, willing to brave the perils of the deep, in the belief that old ocean's life-inspiring wave would prove the fabled fountain of youth to her beloved. She had never seen consumption in any of its varied and sometimes beautiful forms. She knew not that the eye could retain its lustre, that the cheek could glow with more than its usual brightness, that the heart could be lured by a false hope, until, like a red leaf of the forest, dropping suddenly from the topmost bough, the doomed one fell, stricken down in an unthought-of moment by the stern destroyer.

"One morning, when Paul had remained much

longer than usual in his apartment, Carlotta sought him for the purpose of winning him abroad.

"He was lying asleep on a couch, where he must have thrown himself from very weariness, as one of the brushes with which he had been painting had fallen from his hand upon the floor. His wife softly approached. She stooped and kissed his lips. He opened his eyes, smiled lovingly upon her, and pointed to the picture.

"'You have made me too beautiful, dearest; this must be a copy of the image in your heart.'

"'Ah, I have not done you justice, you are far more lovely, my own wife, yes, far more lovely—my mother—my mother—' repeated Paul, dreamily. It was evident his thoughts were wandering.

"'You are exhausted, dear love; but sleep now, and I will watch beside you.'

Carlotta knelt down and laid her cheek on his. Afraid of disturbing him, some minutes elapsed ere she again raised her head and turned to look upon the sleeper. She took the hand that hung listlessly by his side. It was cold, and she thought to warm it by pressing it to her lips—to her cheek—to her heart. She bent her ear close to the sleeper—there was no sound; she laid her lips on his—oh, God! where was the warm breath? A horrible dread came over her, and, unable from the intensity of her agony to utter any cry, she sank down and gazed fixedly in her husband's face,

realizing the heart-touching thoughts of the poet.

> " 'And still upon that face I look,
> And think 't will smile again,
> And still the thought I cannot brook
> That I must look in vain.'

"And thus were they found by her father, who was the first to enter the apartment. Paul quite dead—Carlotta lying to all appearance lifeless at his side—and before them the unfinished picture.

"When the fond wife was restored to consciousness, and felt the full weight of that misery that was crushing out her young life, her reason became unsettled. It was very sad to see her wandering from room to room as if in search of some lost object. She would frequently rise with a sudden start, walk hurriedly to the window, and stand for a long time in an attitude of fixed attention, then mournfully shaking her head to and fro, would slowly resume her accustomed seat, and in a low voice repeat 'Not yet—not yet—Paul still lingers in Rome.' Carlotta remained in this melancholy state during the time I was in Florence, but a letter received since my return home informs me that after a short interval, in which reason resumed her sway, the sufferer calmly departed, coupling the name of her beloved with the rest and the bliss of Paradise.

"The wretched father was filled with self-upbraidings. But for him, he said, Paul Talbot might have been living, and his daughter living, happy in each other's love. He spoke truly. To gratify his ambition, Paul had over tasked the powers of life. The frail shrine was consumed by the flame which for years had been scorching and burning into the heart and soul of the artist. Too late had he obtained his reward. Too late had Carlotta's father consented to her union with Paul. Too late had the old man found that by his daughter's alliance with a man of genius, a greater lustre would have shone upon his house than could ever be reflected from his glittering hoard."

Here ended my friend's narration, and while with him I lamented the fate of genius, I could not forbear blaming the conduct of the wealthy Florentine. Nor could I help thinking, that too often the golden ears betray the ass, while wisdom, virtue, talent, constitute the only real greatness.

THE FIRST STEP.

Of all the woe, and want, and wretchedness, which awaken our compassion; of all the scenes of misery which call so loudly for sympathy; there is none that so harrows up the feelings as the drunkard's home! Look at him who began life with the love of friends, the admiration of society, the prospect of extensive usefulness; look at him in after years, when he has learned to love the draught, which, we shudder while we say it, reduces him to the level of the brute. Where is now his usefulness? where the admiration, where the love, that once were his? Love! none but the love of a wife, or a child, can cling to him in his degradation. Look at the woman, who, when she repeated "for better for worse," would have shrunk with terror had the faintest shadow of the

"worse" fallen upon her young heart. Is that she who on her bridal day was adorned with such neatness and taste? Ah me, what a sad change! And the children, for whom he thanked God at their birth; the little ones of whom he had been so proud, whom he had dandled on his knee, and taught to lisp the endearing name of father—see them trembling before him, and endeavouring to escape his violence.

O God, have pity upon the drunkard's home! Who that looks upon it but would turn fearingly aside from the first step to ruin?

James Boynton was the first-born of his parents, and a proud and happy mother was Mrs. Boynton, when her friends gathered around her to look at her pretty babe. Carefully was he tended, and all his infantile winning ways were treasured as so many proofs of his powers of endearment.

In wisdom has the Almighty hidden the deep secrets of futurity from mortal ken. When the mother first folds her infant to her heart, could she look through the long vista of years, and see the suffering, the sin, the shame, which may be the portion of her child, would she not ask God in mercy to take the infant to Himself? Would she not unrepiningly, nay thankfully, bear all the agony of seeing her little one, with straightened limbs, and folded hands, and shrouded form, carried from her bosom to its baby-grave? And yet,

not one of all the thousands who are steeped in wickedness and crime but a mother's heart has gladdened when the soft eye first looked into hers, and the soft cheek first nestled on her own. And, still more awful thought! not one of all these Pariahs of society but has an immortal soul, to save which the Son of God left His glory, and agonized upon the cross!

James grew up a warm-hearted boy, and among his young companions he was a universal favourite. "Jem Boynton is too good-natured to refuse doing anything we ask," said Ned Granger one day to a school-fellow who feared that James would not join a party of rather doubtful character, which was forming for what they called a frolic. And this was the truth. Here lay the secret of Boynton's weakness—he was too good-natured; for this very desirable and truly amiable quality, unless united with firmness of character, is often productive of evil. But we pass over his boyish life, and look at him in early manhood.

He has a fine figure, with a handsome, intelligent countenance, and his manners have received their tone and polish from a free intercourse in refined circles. He passed his college examination with credit to himself, but, from sheer indecision of character, hesitated in choosing a profession. At this time, an uncle, who resided at the South, was about retiring from mercantile life, and he

proposed that James should enter with him as a junior partner, while he would remain for a year or two to give his nephew the benefit of his experience. The business was a lucrative one, and the proposal was accepted.

James left his home at the north, and went to try his fortunes amid new scenes and new temptations. His uncle received him warmly, for the old man had no children of his own, and James was his god-child. His uncle's position in society, and his own frank and gentlemanly demeanour, won him ready access to the hospitality of southern friends, and it was not long before he fell in love with a pretty orphan girl, whom he frequently met at the house of a common acquaintance. That the girl was portionless was no demerit in his uncle's eyes. Not all his treasures, and they were large, had choked the avenues to the old man's heart, and the young people were made happy by his approval of their union.

After a visit to his friends in the north, James returned with his bride; and in a modern house, furnished with every luxury, the happy pair began their wedded life. And now, who so blest as Boynton? Three years pass away, and two children make their home still brighter. Does no one see the cloud, "not bigger than a man's hand," upon the verge of the moral horizon?

Boynton's dislike to saying "No," when asked

to join a few male friends at dinner, or on a party of pleasure; his very good nature, which made him so desirable a companion, were the means of leading him in the steps to ruin.

"Come, Boynton, another glass."

"Excuse me, my dear fellow, I have really taken too much already."

"Nonsense! it's the parting glass, you must take it."

And Boynton, wanting in firmness of character, yielded to the voice of the tempter. Need we say that, with indulgence, the love for the poison was strengthened?

For awhile the unfortunate man strove to keep up appearances. He was never seen during the day in a state of intoxication; and from a doze on the sofa in the evening, or a heavy lethargic sleep at night, he could awake to converse with his friends, or attend at his counting-room, without his secret habit being at all suspected.

But who that willingly dallies with temptation, can foretell the end? Who can "lay the flattering unction to his soul," that in a downward path he can stop when he pleases, and unharmed retrace his steps? Like the moth, circling nearer and still nearer to the flame, until the insect falls with scorched wing a victim to its own temerity, so will the pinions of the soul be left scathed and drooping.

Soon Boynton began to neglect his business,

and he was secretly pointed out as a man of intemperate habits. At last he was shunned, shaken off, by the very men who had led him astray. Who were most guilty? Let Heaven judge.

Here let us pause, and ask why it is that so many look upon a fellow-being verging to the brink of ruin, without speaking one persuasive word, or doing one kindly act, to win him back to virtue? Why it is, that, when fallen, he is thrust still further down by taunting and contempt? Oh, such was not the spirit of Him who came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Such was not the spirit of Him who said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." How often, instead of throwing the mantle of charity over a brother's sin, instead of telling him his fault "between thee and him alone," is it bared to the light of day, trumpeted to a cold and censure-loving world, until the victim either sinks into gloomy despondency, and believes it hopeless for him to attempt amendment, or else stands forth in bold defiance, and rushes headlong to his ruin! Not one human being stands so perfect in his isolation, as to be wholly unmoved by contact with his fellows; what need, then, for the daily exercise of that god-like charity which "suffereth long and is kind," which "rejoiceth not in iniquity," which "beareth all things, believeth all things, *hopeth* all things, endureth all things."

Seven years have gone with their records to eternity;—where is James Boynton now?

In one room of a miserable, dilapidated tenement, inhabited by many unfortunate victims of poverty and vice, lives he who on his wedding-day had entered a home which taste and luxury rendered enviable. Squalor and discomfort are on every side. His four children are pale and sickly, from want of proper food, and close confinement in that deleterious atmosphere. They have learned to hide away when they hear their father's footsteps, for, alas! to his own, he is no longer the *good-natured* man. Fallen in his own esteem, frequently the subject of ribald mirth, his passions have become inflamed, and he vents his ill-humour on his defenceless family. He no longer makes even a show of doing something for their support; and, to keep them from starving, his wife works wherever and at whatever she can find employment.

A few more years, and where is Mrs. Boynton? Tremble, ye who set an example to your families of which ye cannot foretell the consequences! Tremble, ye whom God has made to be the protectors, the guides, the counsellors, of the women ye have vowed to love and cherish! Mrs. Boynton, like her husband, has fallen! In an evil hour, harassed by want, ill-used by her husband, she tasted the fatal cup. It produced temporary for-

getfulness, from which she woke to a sense of shame and anguish. Ah! she had no mother, no sister, no woman-friend who truly cared for her, to warn, to plead, to admonish! Again was she tempted, again she tasted, and that squalid home was rendered tenfold more wretched by the absence of all attempt at order. However great may be the sorrow and distress occasioned by a man's love for strong drink, it is not to be compared to the deep wretchedness produced by the same cause in woman; and it is matter for thankfulness, that so few men drag down their wives with them in their fall.

Providence raised up a friend who took the barefooted children of the Boyntons from being daily witnesses of the evil habits of their parents; and so dulled were all the finer feelings of his nature, that James Boynton parted from them without a struggle.

Like the Lacedæmonians of old, who exposed the vice to render it hateful in the eyes of the beholders, we might give other and more harrowing scenes from real life: but let this one suffice. Thank God for the change which public opinion has already wrought! Thank God for the efforts which have been made to stay the moral pestilence! Oh, it is fearful to think how many homes have been made desolate—how many hearts have been broken—how many fine minds have been ruined—

how many lofty intellects have been humbled! It is fearful to think of the madness—the crime—the awful death—which follow in the First Step to Ruin!

A WIFE'S LOVE.

"For better for worse."

"WHO was that pale, interesting-looking woman we saw in the church-yard this afternoon, Eleanor?"

"Do you mean the lady who led a little girl by the hand, and who bowed to us as we were passing?"

"The same."

"That was Mrs. Danvers, the English lady who lives in the pretty cottage, half embowered in clematis and honey-suckle, at the foot of the lane. As I have promised to make you acquainted with some particulars in her eventful history, we may not perhaps find a more fitting time than the present for their recital.

"About three years ago we heard that the cottage, which had long been unoccupied, was rented to a family who were strangers in the neighbourhood, and whose manners and appearance betokened their belonging to that class of whom we usually speak as having seen better days. An air of neat-

ness and taste was soon visible about the place—the little flower garden was assiduously cultivated, and the China roses which had been suffered to run wild, were pruned and trained against the parlour window. Often at twilight a low, sweet female voice was heard singing an evening hymn, or chanting one of the beautiful anthems of the Church of England.

"You know that during the whole of that summer the parsonage was vacant, and the service of the church performed occasionally by a clergyman from B——, who, although an excellent man, had no time to spare save for Sunday worship. Owing to this, Mr. Danvers and his amiable wife were left without that consolation from a beloved pastor which is always so grateful in hours of affliction.

"It is often cause for regret that in some instances so little intercourse is maintained between the clergyman and his people. They listen to his preaching on Sunday, go home and criticise his style and manner of delivery, and think no more about the speaker until the bell on the next Lord's day calls them to their accustomed seat in the sanctuary. I do not say this is the case with all: God forbid. The devout Christian goes from higher and holier motives than the mere sanction of custom, or the hope of hearing a fine specimen of pulpit eloquence; he knows that he is about entering, as it were, the presence-chamber of the Deity,

and in the sublime services of the church his heart holds communion with the Majesty on high; to the sermon he listens as to the teaching of one of Christ's ambassadors, and, although he may be an ardent admirer of the graces of oratory, regards the matter of the discourse more than the manner of him who delivers it. Still, in a mixed multitude there are many who might be benefited, ay, benefited perhaps to the saving of their souls, by friendly words of encouragement or warning from their pastor in private. There is hardly one human heart so depraved as not to be won upon by kindness; and the kindness of a clergyman who has endeared himself to his people by a personal interest in their concerns, is, of all others, the most touching, while, in the regard entertained for him by his flock, there is a union of affectionate love and filial reverence so harmoniously blended as to form one of the most delightful emotions.

"There is something so holy, so sacred in religion, that it shuns observation, and retires within the innermost recesses of the heart. This is more particularly the case with the young, and yet how frequently do those who are about to engage in this world's warfare languish for want of spiritual intercourse! And there are moments, too, in the lives of some—moments of heart-crushing sorrow —moments of pain and agony of spirit,—when the mind is like to 'sweet bells jangled out of tune;'

oh, what would not then be given for one hour's free, and familiar, and confiding communion with a dear servant of God's altar! But it may not be; heart-sorrow, like heart-piety, is unobtrusive, and cannot be poured into the ear of the clergyman, esteemed though he may be, who is hardly known to his people out of the pulpit. Pardon me this long digression; the subject is one which in former years was painfully brought home to me in more than one instance, and it has often occupied my thoughts.

"Some two years or more after Mr. Danvers came to reside at the cottage, Mr. Elwood was called to take charge of this parish, and it was on one of the loveliest days of autumn that we arrived at the parsonage. The evening was just closing in, and the glories of the 'sun's golden set' were falling on the many-coloured leaves of the old trees around our dwelling; the river lay slumbering in the distance, unruffled as a mirror, and the soft breeze scarcely stirred the long branches of the willow that hung over the eastern doorway; all was beauty! beauty in repose! it was a scene worthy the pencil of a Claude. Never shall I forget the holy calm which stole over my soul at that sweet hour, while I silently prayed that the labours of Ernest might be blessed, and that the close of both our lives might be serene and tranquil as the beautiful twilight of that autumn evening.

"The next day being Sunday there was no opportunity for more than a casual observation of those who attended church; but on Monday morning Mr. Elwood left home for the purpose of visiting his parishioners, and ascertaining if there were any among the poorer classes who needed assistance. It was not until his return in the afternoon that he called at the house of Mr. Danvers; the reception he met with was grateful to his heart, and enlisted his sympathies in favour of its inmates. I was so much interested by what he told me of the family, that at an early hour on the following day I knocked at the door of the cottage. It was opened by Mrs. Danvers, and on my introducing myself, I was shown into the little parlour whose rose-latticed window had been the object of my admiration; and as my eye strayed round the room, I saw that the hand of taste had been busy within those whitewashed walls, and under that lowly ceiling. Mrs. Danvers said that her husband had been ill during the night, and had just fallen into a gentle slumber, from which she hoped he would wake refreshed and free from pain. The entrance of her little girl interrupted our conversation, and as the child whispered 'Papa is awake,' I rose to depart; but Mrs. Danvers requested me to stay and see her husband. On accompanying her into the small chamber where, half raised in bed, supported by pillows, rested Mr. Danvers, I

looked upon his face, and that one look was enough! the high white forehead, from which had been thrown back the rich clusters of chesnut hair, was damp and pallid, while the deep blue eye shone with unnatural brilliancy.

"It was from Mr. Danvers's own lips that Ernest at intervals, during frequent visits, heard his story. He was an only son, and had been heir to a large fortune; and while yet at college, he was a welcome visitor in the family of Mr. Travers, a friend of his father's. A slight and graceful figure, sunny ringlets falling around a face of girlish loveliness, manners at once timid and confiding, a highly-cultivated taste, and a mind filled with all pure and lofty thoughts, won for Emily Travers the heart of the young collegian.

"Their parents saw with pleasure the attachment of their children, and it was arranged that as soon as Charles had completed his college course, and made choice of a profession, they should be united. The time at length arrived, and Charles, having chosen the study of the law, received the hand of his beautiful bride from her father at the altar.

"For awhile after his marriage, he followed with avidity the path he had marked out for himself; but his was not one of those minds which, for the purpose of obtaining eminence, can concentrate its energies upon dry and abstruse subjects; his

studies became irksome, and a renewal of acquaintance with some dissipated young men he had known at Eton, tended still more to alienate his mind from legal pursuits. Regard for his wife, whom he loved amid all his wanderings, kept him for a time from open excess; but the tyrant habit became too strong for his weak resolutions, and one night the talented and accomplished Charles Danvers was assisted by boon companions to his home. His wretched wife watched over him through that long night of misery, with her unconscious infant cradled in her arms; and when the morning came, and her unhappy husband awoke to the humiliating sense of his degradation, she uttered no complaint, for she had spent the night in prayer to God to enable her to bear her husband's infirmities without irritating him by needless reproaches, and she trusted that He who was able and willing to save to the uttermost would yet bring back the wanderer. The meek forbearance of his wife powerfully affected Mr. Danvers, and he inwardly resolved that she should never again suffer through his misconduct; but alas! these resolves were made in his own strength, he had not yet learned that it was God's grace alone that could keep him from error. To the vice of intemperance was now joined a passion for gambling, and in a short time he was bankrupt.

"The father of Mrs. Danvers wished her to leave

her husband, and return to the parental roof; mildly, yet firmly, she refused.

"'I vowed before God's altar to abide with him until death should part us. Through all changes I shall seek strength to keep my vow, for if his wife flee from him as from a polluted thing, who will watch over him in hours of sadness and remorse? who will administer consolation to his wounded spirit, and make him feel that he is still capable of loving, that he is still beloved? My father, I cannot leave him,'—and for the first time Mr. Travers parted in anger from his daughter.

"By selling some articles of value which had been saved from the wreck of their fortune, Mrs. Danvers obtained a considerable sum, and prevailed on her husband to embark for America. The spirit of the haughty man was subdued, and he who should have been her supporter, her protector, was now obliged to look to his fair and delicate wife for encouragement and advice.

"On their arrival there, they rented the cottage where they reside, and, far removed from scenes of former temptations, the prayers of the devoted woman were answered, and she blessed God that He had spared her to see her beloved husband a follower of Jesus. Such was the story told to Mr. Elwood, and you may judge how great was the interest it caused us to take in the welfare of this suffering family.

"Mr. Danvers lingered through the winter, and when March, with its winds so fatal to invalids, had gone by, and he was able to sit by the parlour window reading from the Word of Life, the fond wife would hope that he might be spared a little longer.

"It was after an evening spent with them in conversing on the hopes and glories of immortality, during which Mrs. Danvers, at her husband's request, had read Keble's soothing and beautiful 'Burial of the Dead,' that Mr. Elwood and myself were sent for in great haste; Mr. Danvers was worse; it was thought he could not live till morning. When we entered the chamber where he lay, we were instantly struck with the change in his appearance, and knew that death was rapidly approaching. Mrs. Danvers rose from the bedside, where she had been kneeling, and pressed our hands in silence; her husband had wished Mr. Elwood to administer to him the sacrament of the Lord's Supper once more on earth, ere he should be called to sit down at the table of the Lamb.

"It was a solemn and a holy scene! there lay one who had erred, and who, clinging to the cross of Christ as the only refuge for sinners, had been forgiven; one who was about to enter on the realities of an eternal state, and to behold things which St. Paul has declared are not lawful for a man to utter, and the sight of which, for upwards of forty

years, animated the zeal of the holy Apostle, and made him desire to 'depart and be with Christ, which was far better.' The 'fair linen cloth' was spread upon a small table near the half-opened window, through which the fragrance of spring flowers came wafted on the night air; the stillness of death was around, broken only by the voice and step of the pastor in the communion service.

> "'Sweet awful hour! the only sound
> One gentle footstep gliding round,
> Offering by turns, on Jesus' part,
> The Cross to every hand and heart.'

After all had partaken of the holy elements, Mr. Danvers, who had sunk exhausted on his pillow, suddenly rousing himself, blessed his wife and child, and commended his soul to God. Again all was hushed; and as Mr. Elwood knelt and offered up the solemn commendatory prayer for a sick person at the point of departure, while the first hues of dawn were brightening the horizon, the spirit departed to the full light of immortal day.

"It is now six months since, and the widowed mourner has borne her bereavement with a pious resignation to the Divine will. She has not sorrowed indeed as those who have no hope, for she feels that the grave is the gate to heaven, through which her husband has passed before her; and if her trials have been great, great also have been her

consolations. Her trust was in One mighty to save, in One who has said, 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee by the right hand of my righteousness.'"

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